

## High and Exalted (8): What Do They See in Your House?

---

(Isaiah 39)

### I. Introduction

- A. Larry Flint wrote an article in *L.A. Times* entitled “*My Friend Jerry Falwell*”
1. Background: Larry Flint published *Hustler* magazine, the smuttiest of smut
    - a. He printed untrue, uncouth, uncivilized jokes about Falwell-- was sued
    - b. Falwell won \$50 million, but the case was thrown out by Supreme Court
  2. Falwell and Flint appeared on *Larry King Live*, and they started talking
    - a. They had more in common than they realized (*fathers were bootleggers*)
    - b. Flint knew Falwell was trying to save him (“*I knew what he was selling*”)
    - c. But they found they liked each; they had many philosophic discussions
      - 1) Falwell visited every time he was in California, often just walking in
      - 2) Secretaries put calls directly through without normal gatekeeping
  3. It constantly surprised them both they had become the unlikeliest friends

*The more I got to know Falwell, the more I began to see that his public portrayals were caricatures of himself. There was a dichotomy between the real Falwell and the one he showed the public.*

    - a. I wonder if this public persona was something he put on for church folk
    - b. Preachers can try pretty hard to look/act the part (*well, some preachers*)
      - 1) I knew a preacher who cut his grass in shirt and tie and wingtips!
      - 2) And if you lead “*Moral Majority*,” you try to look pretty buttoned-up
    - c. Might he have connected with more people like Flint without “persona”
    - d. At any rate, Jerry Falwell and Larry Flint made for a pretty odd couple
- B. We continue our study of Isaiah with another example of a very odd couple
1. Hezekiah has emissaries from Marduk-Baladan, king of Babylon (**Isa 39:1**)
    - a. Hezekiah got a Hallmark “*Get Well Soon*” card (“*Glad You Didn’t Die*”)
    - b. Are we surprise Babylon sent this? Or surprised they knew Hezekiah?
    - c. Not only does the king of Babylon play nice, so does Hezekiah (**Isa 39:2**)
  2. It sounds shocking that Judah and Israel are so chummy-- makes odd couple
    - a. It shouldn’t; Assyria was the dominant power and Babylon a wanna-be
    - b. Marduk-Baladan rose to power in resistance against Sargon II in 721 BC
      - 1) He was looking for allies in his fight against Assyria... like Hezekiah
      - 2) Hezekiah’s illness and recovery served as excuse to approach Judah
  3. Isn’t history fun? Isaiah’s point here isn’t about history... and it isn’t fun!
-

## II. What Did They See in Your House: Hezekiah

- A. The text says Hezekiah shows the Babylonian envoy *everything* in his palace
1. That doesn't mean he showed his messy garage or the junk drawer in kitchen
    - a. He showed his wealth and power, things you stress when making a treaty
    - b. You need to know your treaty partner can both make war and pay for it
      - 1) Why make a treaty with a country so poor/weak they can't help you?
      - 2) We'd never make a treaty with Latvia/Lithuania or Slovakia/Slovenia
      - 3) Wait, they're in NATO; countries were more particular in OT times
    - c. Hezekiah isn't bragging but showing he can be a good ally (*OK, bragging*)
  2. When Isaiah shows up spitting fire, Hezekiah is a bit confused (**Isa 39:3-4**)
    - a. Isaiah asks, "*What did they see?*" Hezekiah naively, "*Well, everything*"
    - b. Hezekiah is just doing what kings do, political schmoozing and statecraft
      - 1) Remember, Babylon is no threat to Hezekiah; Assyria is the threat
      - 2) It only makes sense to consider a treaty, "*The enemy of my enemy...*"
    - c. No, it makes no sense to show your wealth and defenses to foreign power
      - 1) Hezekiah is looking through the eye of politics, not the eye of faith
      - 2) God promised to defend Judah (**38:6**). Hezekiah praised God (**38:20**)
    - d. Hezekiah is now showing that he trusts his own statecraft more than God
- B. What makes this more biting is what Isaiah knew... and so do we (**Isa 39:5-7**)
1. Making a treaty with Babylon made sense from a human perspective
    - a. But Hezekiah really should have asked Isaiah and God about that
    - b. God was raising up the Babylonian nation to punish Judah for her sin
      - 1) All that he had shown off to Babylon would be carried off by Babylon
      - 2) His children's children would serve the Babylonian king as eunuchs
    - c. Judah would lose everything to Babylon, and Hezekiah invites them in
  2. The question is, "*Who does Hezekiah want as his ally— God or Babylon*"
    - a. His eagerness to show off for Babylon shows a lack of trust in God
    - b. God promised to deliver Judah and Jerusalem from the Assyrians
      - 1) Maybe Hezekiah keeping his options open— it's still a lack of faith
      - 2) Maybe he's just doing what kings do, hedging his bets— lack of faith
    - c. His response to all this shows that he is in a selfish place (**Isa 39:8**)

### III. What Have They Seen in Your House: Today

- A. What is the point for us today? **First**, let's make sure we know what it is **NOT**
1. The point isn't we're supposed to just sit back and let God do everything
    - a. If Hezekiah knew there was going to be a war, being prepared was smart
    - b. We suggested **Isa 38-39** is flashback to before Sennacherib's invasion
      - 1) Promise God made in **Isa 38** was fulfilled by God's in **Isa 36-37**
      - 2) Remember how Hezekiah spread Sennacherib's threat at temple?
      - 3) Remember his prayer? That's how God wants Hezekiah to act
  2. Hezekiah did act; he knew war was coming and he prepared by being smart
    - a. My parents did the tourist thing in Jerusalem; some of you have too
      - 1) One of the things they did was to walk through "*Hezekiah's Tunnel*"
      - 2) Hezekiah built it to bring water into city during siege (**2 Chron 32:30**)
    - b. Hezekiah didn't do wrong for trying to get ready for the coming war
  3. Point for us is NOT that trusting God means waiting idly for Him to act
    - a. Trusting God in prayer for healing don't mean we skip doctor's appt
    - b. Trusting God for our food and shelter doesn't mean we refuse to work
      - 1) Some Thessalonians quit working sat around twiddling their thumbs
      - 2) That wasn't faith in Christ's return; it was just being lazy... or dumb
    - c. At the Red Sea, Moses told Israel to stand still and see God's deliverance
      - 1) But standing still did not mean that they just stood still (**Exo 14:15**)
      - 2) Like the old joke about guy trusting God to save him from flood...
- B. Hezekiah sought alliance with Babylon, a consistent symbol of worldly power
1. What was the first rebellion after the flood? *Tower of Babel* (Babylon)
    - a. What is Peter's code when he sends greetings from Rome? (**1 Pet 5:13**)
    - b. What is John symbol for the evil empire (**Rev 16:19**) (*it's used 7 times*)
  2. Hezekiah's mistake was that he wasn't ready to trust in God only and fully
    - a. He wanted to hedge his bets (*you bet on one team, but also bet on other*)
      - 1) It wasn't that he didn't believe God; he just believed in Babylon too
      - 2) It wasn't he didn't trust God; he just wasn't ready to trust God alone
    - b. As if Joshua said, "*Ok, we'll walk around but we'll fire mortars too*"
    - c. David saying, "*I come to you with the word of God... and a Glock 19*"

- C. What do we really believe when we hear the promises God makes to us?
1. Jesus promises if we seek Him, all we need will be given us (**Matt 6:31-33**)
    - a. Do we really believe that? I believe most of us do, at least in theory
    - b. What we struggle with is in trusting God's view of what we need
      - 1) I'm pretty sure God doesn't think I need a new car, boat or golf clubs
      - 2) That's OK, I don't want any of those things (*a new iPhone this fall*)
    - c. What do we do when our wants run smack into the promises of God?
      - 1) Buy on credit? ("*things we don't need with money we don't have*")
      - 2) Work second job? (*Taking time from things that are more important*)
      - 3) Exhaust our saving? (*So that we have no reserve to share with others*)
    - d. Are we like Hezekiah, making dangerous alliances because we lack faith?
  2. God tells us to trust Him and not to fear the world's threats (**1 Pet 3:14**)
    - a. Do we believe in God to where we are immune to fear? *I fear we don't!*
    - b. We live in a political reality that is dominated by the politics of fear
      - 1) Tweets from both sides predict gloom, despair and agony on us all
        - a) Threat is from invasion of immigrants or multi-national corporations
        - b) Angry rhetoric produces fearful people and fearful people are gullible
      - 2) Christians get swept up in anger and fear and forget promises of God
    - c. Will we trust God or will we continue to let world's fear steal our joy?
    - d. We can trust the powers of this world or we can trust God... not both!