

### Is. 3:1-12 “The Break-Down of Leadership”

**For the Children:** Imagine sending a high-school sports team to play against another team. What do you think would happen if you made the captain of your team one of the children from year 1 – a student who had absolutely no experience in playing that sport, let alone leading a team. I guess you wouldn't expect to win that game. The Lord wants His church led by men who are godly, faithful and wise. Not because He expects such men to do everything right. But because such men will lead the people in looking to God for our strength and wisdom and security. For it is only the Lord who can keep His church safe. **Questions:** How important is good leadership in the church? How do we know that the Lord will keep His church from being destroyed? What happens to churches that depart from God's ways?

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#### Introduction:

##### **First Point: Judah's Sin**

- 1) The Overview: Judah's speech and action were against the Lord (v. 8) – implying whole-hearted rebellion. They openly displayed their sin like Sodom and their guilt was written all over their faces (v. 9). By this they harmed themselves. They are described as a ruin (v. 6), a people that had stumbled and fallen (v. 8).
- 2) The Role of the Leaders: Vs. 12 singles out the oppression of the leaders as one of the key causes of this decline. They are described as being like children and “women rule over them.” This means either weak men, who were like women in that they were not gifted by God to rule home or church; or weak men who followed the orders of their ungodly wives. See Amos 4:1. The leaders were blind guides, leading others astray. False prophets tickled the ears of the people. The world-wide church of today shows some similarity! We are reminded of how important it is to choose faithful leaders – and for those leaders to take their stand on God's Word.

##### **Second Point: The Lord's Judgement**

- 1) Removal of Supply and Support: God's judgement for these sins involved the removal of Judah's supply (bread and water) and support (various types of leaders and advisors listed in vss. 2-3). This happened in Exile, when the Babylonians took the leading men away in the first wave of deportations – leaving only ruins and poverty for those remaining in Jerusalem.
- 2) Led by Children: Deprived of the leaders in whom they had placed undeserved trust, the people chose unsuitable men – younger men, who acted even more like capricious children than the previous leaders. As in Rehoboam's time, mature and wise elders were disregarded and the young “stormed” against their elders (v. 5). Society was breaking down and the people became even more oppressed.
- 3) Descent into Anarchy: The situation became so serious, that men would grab anyone who had a poor-man's cloak, as if he were more blessed than the rest. They would try to force this man to become a ruler, but he would refuse to take the job: Judah was too broken for man to heal (vss. 6-7). We see a parallel collapse in many churches today, where liberalism has destroyed congregations and even whole denominations.

##### **Third Point: The Lord's Promise of Redemption**

- 1) The Lord's Compassion: Despite the sin, God is described as crying out “O My people!” (twice in v. 12). Compare this with Jesus' cry, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!” (Mt. 23:37). In His love and compassion for His people, the Lord promises a faithful remnant that it will (ultimately) go well with them (v. 11). They will eat the fruit of their faithful actions (v. 10).
- 2) A Gracious Reward: This is not deserved – it is a gracious reward to a remnant that God renews and restores. The ones who get what they have earned are the wicked! This demonstrates that while we should choose faithful men to lead the church – and our leaders should strive to remain faithful – yet we must place our ultimate trust in the Lord who preserves His church, not in princes

#### Conclusion: