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# John the Baptist

**Bible Reading: Luke 3.1-18**

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*This dialogue makes use of translation of Luke 3.1-18 by Peter Blackburn. Hezrah and Hannah represent the mixed reactions of the crowd between feelings of offence and the desire for honesty before God.*

## John the Baptist

NARRATOR: The word of the Lord came to John, the son of Zechariah, out in the wilderness, and he was going about the country near the Jordan calling on people, “If you want to be forgiven, repent and be baptised.”

As John saw the crowds coming out to him, he said, “You are the offspring of vipers. Who taught you to flee from the coming wrath? Show by the fruit of your lives that you have truly repented. Don’t tell me you are children of Abraham – God can make children of Abraham out of these stones! The time of God’s judgment is near. His axe is ready to cut down the unfruitful trees and throw them into the fire!”

The crowds began to ask him, “Then what shall we do?”

“If you’ve got two tunics,” he said, “then give to the one who hasn’t any! And do the same with your food!”

Some tax-collectors came to be baptised too. “What shall we do, Teacher?” they asked.

“Don’t take any more in tax than you’re supposed to,” he replied.

“And what about us?” some soldiers asked.

He told them, “Don’t terrify people or defraud them, and be satisfied with your wages.”

HEZRAH: He doesn’t beat around the bush, Hannah!

HANNAH: Comes right to the point all the time. I don’t know about you, Hezrah, but I found him touching a few sensitive spots!

HEZRAH: That’s right! I thought he was a bit game in what he said to the tax-collectors, but I was completely staggered at how direct he was with the soldiers!

HANNAH: But they’d all come, Hezrah! They’d all come! I think they were all wanting some honesty. They didn’t expect him to be pussy-footing around!

HEZRAH: Not that his approach to the rest of us looked like a recipe for winning friends and influencing people!

HANNAH: You’re right, of course! “Offspring of vipers” – who does he think we are?

HEZRAH: It was the snake that tempted Eve. Is he putting us on the side of evil? We are children of Abraham! We are God’s own people!

HANNAH: And yet, Hezrah, he was right. Uncomfortable but right!

HEZRAH: I don’t understand you, Hannah!

HANNAH: I want some honesty too. That’s why I came to hear him. I felt uncomfortable because I knew he was right!

HEZRAH: But you’re a good upright person! He has no right saying that sort of thing about good Jews like you and me!

HANNAH: Unless the need to repent is ours also!

HEZRAH: You mean...?

HANNAH: When the Lord has sent prophets in the past, it has often been because his people need to repent.

HEZRAH: You mean we are in danger of the coming wrath?

HANNAH: I believe so. And yet... God, in his steadfast love, has promised Someone who will come, the coming Messiah!

HEZRAH: This John... you don’t think... perhaps... that he...

NARRATOR: As they waited, many of the people were seriously wondering if perhaps John himself might be the Messiah.

John answered their thoughts by saying, “I am baptising you with water, but someone is coming who is stronger than I am. I am not worthy to untie his sandal-strap. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire! He is ready with his winnowing shovel to clean out his threshing-floor. He will gather the wheat into his granary, but will burn the chaff with unquenchable fire!”

He urged many other things too and declared the good news to the people.