



Sunday School Lesson
Luke 3:1-20
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Filling Elijah's Shoes



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Out of the first Christian century there comes one of the most fascinating characters in the person of John the Baptist, or, as in older English translations, John the Baptist. This name is derived solely from Matthew's gospel which says in [3:1](#) Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτιστής (John the Baptizer). The other three gospels merely identify him as John. Matthew's label has caught on down through the centuries as a way of distinguishing this John from the [several other individuals](#) by that name in the pages of the New Testament, and especially to distinguish him from the Apostle John who is traditionally understood to have written the fourth gospel. Several things capture our attention about him: his unusual dress and diet, his blunt preaching, his unique connection to Jesus et als. Down through the centuries he has been discussed by biblical scholars and others; he has been painted by just about all of the world's great artists. Quite fascinating are the interpretations of him by the many artists who have sought to capture some aspect of either his personality and/or of his ministry at various points of description in the four gospels of the New Testament. With elements of the sternness of the OT prophets combined with his relationship with Jesus, most have endeavored to blend the two together to reflect his role as a "paper clip" bringing the Old and New Testaments together, to use the words of a few NT scholars.



In the unit theme of the Smyth-Helwys Formations studies of "The New Day," where Malachi 3:1-4 is linked to Luke 3:1-6, John does stand as [the new Elijah](#), although Luke 3 makes no mention of this at all. Such a link is to be found elsewhere in the gospels, but not in our passage. Consequently, little treatment of this motif will be given in our study.

I Context

Once more, the relevant materials from [previous Luke studies](#) will serve to set the historical and literary background for our study.

a. Historical

External History. Traditionally, Luke the physician is believed to have composed this gospel account. No direct mention of authorship exists inside the document. Thus this view both rests on the domi-

nating opinions of the church fathers during the first six or so centuries of Christian history. Also, this view is reflected in the title of the gospel account which was added to the document a century or more later

as an identifying mark that reflected this growing consensus of view point. Interestingly, a variety of titles surface beginning in the third century in the various existing copies of the gospel account. They range for “according to Luke,” to “The Holy Gospel according to Luke.” A few variations surface with titles between these two in length.

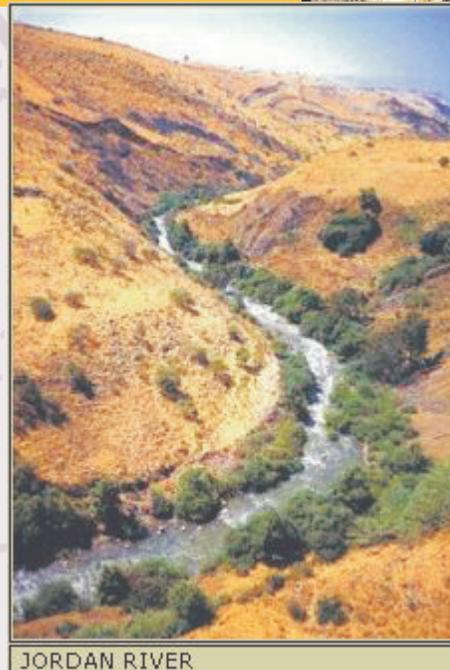
Since both Luke and Acts come from the same source, and were most likely written in that order, the origin of these two documents comes sometime after the end of the time period covered in Acts 28, the beginning of the imprisonment of the apostle Paul in Rome in the early 60s. In the Source Critical view of Markan priority, the gospel was composed after Mark’s gospel in the 60s. Signals of Luke’s awareness of the Roman destruction of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem in the early 70s are present, strongly suggesting a date subsequent to that tragedy. Consequently, most will date the origin of these two NT documents between the middle 70s to the middle 80s of the first Christian century. Where they were composed is less certain. Most likely, that depends on where the patron Theophilus (cf. [Lk. 1:1-4](#) and Acts 1:1-2) lived. This could range somewhere in the northern Mediterranean Sea region anywhere from Italy eastward to Antioch in Syria. Since he paid Luke to compose these writings and also for the copying of these documents for distribution, Luke as a slave physician would have done his work near where this wealthy Roman patron lived.

To be sure, a lot of “ifs” exist in this scenario, but



in my estimation it accounts better for the existing data than other proposals.

Internal History. The geographical location for John’s ministry as depicted by Luke is given in verse three as “all the region around the Jordan” (πάσαν [τὴν] περίχωρον τοῦ Ἰορδάνου). The [Jordan River](#) connects the Sea of Galilee with the Dead Sea to the south. From north to south the river is about 250 km or a little over 130 miles. The snake like shape of the river, however, makes it over 200 miles in length. The river drops in elevation over 2,300 feet from the north to the south. The



site of Jesus’ baptism has been debated as to whether it was closer to the Sea of Galilee or to the Dead Sea. One popular site is close to the opening of the Sea of Galilee in the north. Luke’s term seems to imply that John roamed the distance of the Jordan from the

north to the south in his preaching ministry. Luke also mentions the [Judean wilderness](#) in 3:2 as where John was at the calling of God to preach and baptize. Mark and Luke merely say “in the wilderness” (ἐν

τῆ ἐρήμῳ) but Matthew says “in the wilderness of Judea” (ἐν τῆ ἐρήμῳ τῆς Ἰουδαίας). This region was dominantly in the south around the western side of the Dead Sea. The evident reason for staying close to the Jordan River was the need of large amounts of water for his baptismal activities. Thus when large crowds of people



came to listen to John preach and many of them to seek baptism, they had to travel some distance when they came from somewhere in Galilee or from Jerusalem and the other parts of Judea. Additionally, this location placed John near Qumran and the location of much of the Essene segment of ancient Judaism. The depiction of John and his preaching style in addition to the geographical location has pointed many toward a link of John with the [Essene](#) movement in that period of time. Considerable evidence points this direction, but no indisputable evidence exists to establish such a connection.

b. Literary

Genre. A variety of literary forms surface in the twenty verses of our passage. Verses one through six take the shape of a calling or [commissioning](#) narrative. Luke utilizes extensively this OT form that has its roots in God’s call to Abraham to leave the Ur of Chaldees to enter the land of promise. The burning bush episode with Moses helped shape the commissioning concept, but the later prophets beginning with Amos develop much further the concept and the form to a certain extent. The sense of encounter with God who then assigns the individual a mission, the heart of which is to deliver His message to the people, became central to this literary and theological form. Most of the NT writers use this perspective as the literary frame to affirm a divine calling to preach the gospel message.

Verses seven through twenty shift over into a [summary narrative](#). Luke especially signals this shift by switching from the Aorist to the Imperfect tense verbs in the Greek text. The interpretative significance

of this is to summarize patterns of ministry over an extended period of time, rather than one event as is the case with the calling narrative in vv. 1-6. The climatic elements of the summary narrative in vv. 19-20 is to indicate that this pattern of preaching eventually led to John’s imprisonment by Herod.

Literary Setting. Luke pretty much follows his Markan source by using the ministry of John as the signal of [the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry](#). Matthew also closely follows Mark at this point. But both Matthew and Luke have begun their gospel story with the Infancy Narratives, whereas Mark’s gospel begins with this pericope about John. But all three gospel writers see the ministry of John as setting the stage for Jesus’ public ministry. The formal beginning of this ministry will be preceded by baptism and temptation; then Jesus travels to Galilee to start his mission. The description of John’s ministry sets this up in all three gospels.

II. Message

Literary Structure. The internal structure of vv. 1-20 is easy to determine. The commissioning narrative genre forms the introductory section in the first six verses. The subsequent summary narratives in verses 7-20 naturally divide into two basic sections.

Verses 7-14 introduce the content of John’s preaching in a two part manner. The general content of his message is summarized in one long sentence, vv. 7-9. Verses 10-14 then depict responses by the crowds to John’s message. These are set forth in two ways. First in a summarizing manner in vv. 10-11 by the crowds generally. Representative samples of small groups of individuals are then given in vv. 12-14; these include tax-collectors (vv. 12-13) and soldiers (v. 14).

The third section, vv. 15-20, continues a summarizing pattern, but shifts focus away from what John was preaching. Instead, the emphasis falls on who John was. This is introduced in verse 15 by two Genitive Absolute participle constructions “the people were paying close attention; everyone was debating... about whether he might be the Christ”; this sets up John’s answer in vv. 16-17. Verses 18-20 (2 sentences in the Greek text) continues the summarizing structure but leads into the episodic narrative describing the arrest of John. This is contained in a lengthy sentence in vv. 19-20.

Some comment on Luke’s use of his Markan source is important at this point. Luke revamps the Markan narrative extensively with both additions and omissions of elements. Perhaps this can be seen

best by reproducing the texts in parallel columns. Matthew's treatment of the Markan source will be included in order to better observe where he differs from Mark, and where he intersects Luke as both insert material not found in Mark. One can readily observe both similarities and differences among the three

Mt. 3:1-12

1 In those days



John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, 2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." 3 This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.' "

4 Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.

5 Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, 6 and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

Mk. 1:1-8

1 The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

2 As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; 3 the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,' " 4 John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 **And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.**

6 Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.



Luke 3:1-20

1 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, 2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

3 He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, 4 as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; 6 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.' "

gospel accounts. The Johannine parallel, which intersects the synoptic gospel accounts only at one point, is listed in the larger internet version of this study in [parallel columns](#) with these three gospels. In typical fashion the fourth gospel goes its own very different direction in depicting John's ministry.

The **first place** to note is the time frame used to introduce John's ministry. Luke has already (chapter one) clued his readers into John by describing his birth and childhood in parallel to that of Jesus. So the readers of Luke should anticipate the beginning of John's ministry and its connection to that of Jesus. Neither Matthew or Mark do this.

Clearly, Luke's more elaborate listing (3:1-2) sets the stage more chronologically than Matthew's "in those days" (3:1a) or Mark's "the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ" (3:1). Mark's introductory statement is actually the nearest thing to an internal title for either the gospel or the first part of Jesus' ministry that one finds among the four gospels. Clearly he has little concern to set the time frame precisely. Luke, however, takes pains to set up the time frame for the beginning of Jesus' public ministry.

7 But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruit worthy of repentance. 9 Do not presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 10 Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.



11 "I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

7 He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. 8 I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

7 John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 9 Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." 10 And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" 11 In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." 12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" 13 He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." 14 Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

15 As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, 16 John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." 18 So, with

And he does so in the typical fashion of that day. No calendar reference such as the modern Christian calendar existed in widespread use. Thus the positioning of an event was done by listing an approximate occurrence during significant political and religious authorities. More will be said on this in the exegesis of these verses below.

Next, Luke and Matthew summarize the essentials of John's message and base it on the prophet Isaiah. They follow Mark here but reverse the sequence of listing of the OT basis for this message and ministry from Mark's listing. The heart of John's preaching was "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." All three synoptic gospel writers ground this in [Isaiah 40:3-5](#).

Third, Luke omits the Markan description of John's dress and diet (Mk. 1:6), but Matthew includes it (Mt. 3:4). This depiction of John is in the manner of an OT solitary prophet such as Amos. Later, Luke 7:23-26 will make an allusion to John's clothing etc., but without describing it: '23 And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.' 24 When John's messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? 25 What then did you go out to see? Someone

Matt. 14:3-4

3 For Herod had arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because John had been telling him, "It is not lawful for you to have her."

Mk. 6:17-18

17 For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her. 18 For John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."

many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

19 But Herod the ruler, who had been rebuked by him because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the evil things that Herod had done, 20 added to them all by shutting up John in prison.

dressed in soft robes? Look, those who put on fine clothing and live in luxury are in royal palaces. 26 What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet." Thus, for Luke, the symbolic significance of John's appearance was more important than a somewhat detailed description of his dress etc.

Fourth, Luke does

not emphasize the baptizing of the people like Mark (1:5) and Matthew (3:5) do. He does reference it as a part of John's ministry, but makes no statement of John actually baptizing until 3:21.

Fifth, both Matthew (3:7-10) and Luke (3:7-14) include John's blunt message to the crowds: "You brood of vipers..." Both stress the importance of bearing fruit as evidence of repentance. Matthew identifies the audience as Pharisees and Sadducees, while Luke merely calls them "crowds." Luke additionally adds two samples of response to his preaching: tax collectors and soldiers. They are not mentioned in Matthew.

Sixth, both Matthew (3:11-12) and Luke (3:15-18) use the Markan (1:7-8) emphasis on the superiority of Jesus to John. [John 1:26-27](#) somewhat intersects this emphasis but with a more generalized depiction. Of special note in the interpretative history is the Markan phrase "he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (1:8) which becomes "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" in Matthew (3:11) and Luke (3:16). Matthew and Luke seem more directly to be linking this promise to the day of Pentecost in [Acts 2: 3-4](#): "3 Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability." This is not to suggest Mark had something else in mind. Rather, Matthew and especially Luke make it clearer that this is what they had in mind with this Markan emendation.

Finally, Luke includes the arrest of John at the outset of his narrative, while Matthew will follow Mark and include a "flash back" reference to it in their description of the execution of John by Herod toward the end of Jesus' ministry in Galilee. Mark 1:14a merely alludes to John's arrest and he waits until later (6:17-18) to provide the details (6:14-29). Matthew follows Mark in this same pattern (Mt. 4:12 and 14:3-4 [14:1-12]). For these two gospel writers, the writing strategy is to cast Jesus' public ministry in Galilee under the shadow of John's arrest and eventual execution. This was intended to help anticipate Jesus' execution in Jerusalem. Luke chose to not cast Jesus' ministry in quite the same manner, although he first describes John's arrest (3:19-20) and then later John's execution (9:7-9) in separate pericopes. Although Jesus' ministry in Galilee does fall under the shadow of impending death via John's arrest and execution in Luke, the emphasis is not as prominent as in Mark and Matthew.

Hopefully, this comparison will help provide a better backdrop for interpreting Luke and his distinctive manner to describing John's ministry. Without such a study, one could easily miss something important to each of the gospel writers.

a. The Herald, vv. 1-6

Greek NT

3:1 Ἐν ἔτει δὲ πεντεκαίδεκάτῳ τῆς ἡγεμονίας Τιβερίου Καίσαρος, ἡγεμονεύοντος Ποντίου Πιλάτου τῆς Ἰουδαίας,

NASB

1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and

NRSV

1 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his

NLT

1 It was now the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, the Roman emperor. Pilate was governor over Judea; Herod Antipas was ruler over

καὶ τετρααρχοῦντος τῆς Γαλιλαίας Ἡρώδου, Φιλίππου δὲ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ τετρααρχοῦντος τῆς Ἰτουραίας καὶ Τραχωνίτιδος χώρας, καὶ Λυσανίου τῆς Ἀβιληνῆς τετρααρχοῦντος, 3:2 ἐπὶ ἀρχιερέως Ἄννα καὶ Καϊάφα, ἐγένετο ῥῆμα θεοῦ ἐπὶ Ἰωάννην τὸν Ζαχαρίου υἱὸν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ. 3:3 καὶ ἦλθεν εἰς πᾶσαν [τὴν] περίχωρον τοῦ Ἰορδάνου κηρύσσων βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφειν ἁμαρτιῶν, 3:4 ὡς γέγραπται ἐν βίβλῳ λόγων Ἡσαΐου τοῦ προφήτου, *Φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, Ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου, εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ.* 3:5 *πᾶσα φάραγξ πληρωθήσεται καὶ πᾶν ὄρος καὶ βουνὸς ταπεινωθήσεται, καὶ ἔσται τὰ σκολιὰ εἰς εὐθείαν καὶ αἱ τραχεῖαι εἰς ὁδοὺς λείας.* 3:6 καὶ ὄψεται πᾶσα σὰρξ τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ.

his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, 2 in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness. 3 And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; 4 as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT. 5 EVERY RAVINE WILL BE FILLED, AND EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL WILL BE BROUGHT LOW; THE CROOKED WILL BECOME STRAIGHT, AND THE ROUGH ROADS SMOOTH; 6 AND ALL FLESH WILL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD."

brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, 2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. 3 He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, 4 as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; 6 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

Galilee; his brother Philip was ruler over Iturea and Traconitis; Lysanias was ruler over Abilene. 2 Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests. At this time a message from God came to John son of Zechariah, who was living out in the wilderness. 3 Then John went from place to place on both sides of the Jordan River, preaching that people should be baptized to show that they had turned from their sins and turned to God to be forgiven. 4 Isaiah had spoken of John when he said, "He is a voice shouting in the wilderness: 'Prepare a pathway for the Lord's coming! Make a straight road for him! 5 Fill in the valleys, and level the mountains and hills! Straighten the curves, and smooth out the rough places! 6 And then all people will see the salvation sent from God."

Notes:

Luke sets the beginning of John's ministry in the context of the reign of both political and religious authorities. These are

- [Tiberius Caesar](#) (A. D. 14-37): 15 th year
- [Pontius Pilate](#), governor of Judea (A.D. 26-34)
- [Herod Antipas](#), governor of Galilee (4 BC-AD 39)
- [Herod Philip](#), governor of Itguraes & Trachonitis (4 BC-AD 34)
- [Lysanias of Abilene](#), governor (??)
- [Annas](#), high priest (AD 6-[15] to death)
- [Caiaphas](#), high priest (AD 18-37)

The only mystery in this list is Lysanias. And this is largely because of virtually no mentioning of him in ancient Roman or Jewish records. The Jewish high priests were ordained for life, and continued to be considered as high priest until their death, even though they were not actively serving. Annas had

five sons who served as high priest after him. Caiaphas was his son-in-law. Annas remained very influential until his death in the middle of the first century. The intersecting point of these rulers is in the late 20s of the first century, somewhere close to AD 27 to 29. In spite of this being the most precise dating given by the gospel writers, it remains vague and generalized by our standards.

The core point of this lengthy sentence in vv. 1-2 is simply: "the word of God came to John son of Zechariah.." (ἐγένετο ῥῆμα θεοῦ ἐπὶ Ἰωάννην τὸν Ζαχαρίου υἱὸν). While Mark simply says "John appeared in the wilderness preaching...", Luke stresses the "appearing" of the Word of God. The same verb, ἐγένετο, (*egeneto*) is used by both writers. This unusual use of the verb highlights the divine nature of the coming / appearing. Mark stresses the divine leadership of

John, but Luke emphasizes John's message as being from God. John was the son of [Zechariah](#) who was a priest in the temple. Luke has already prepared us to know this man in chapter one. Thus John had godly parents, and also John was a cousin of Jesus as well since Mary and Elizabeth were kin to each other.



The second core statement is "He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (καὶ ἦλθεν εἰς πᾶσαν [τὴν] περιχώρον τοῦ Ἰορδάνου κηρύσσων βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν). John's message in its essence was a message demanding baptism as an outward expression of repentance. This repentance was pointing to forgiveness of sins. [Baptism](#) in the New Testament has two aspects. John's baptism lays a foundation for what emerges into Christian baptism. The focus of John's baptism is repentance, while Christian baptism deepens the idea around the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ as the believer's symbolic identification with Christ in for-

giveness and new birth.

The antecedents of John's practice of baptizing are less clear. They seem to lie in the developing Jewish proselyte ritual of self-baptism connected with ceremonial purification. As far as can be determined, this practice emerged in the intertestamental era between the Old and New Testament eras. When a non-Jew converted to

Judaism, circumcision and a formal commitment to obey God's Law formed the boundary marker between paganism and Judaism. The climatic expression of this transition was baptism symbolizing the washing away of his paganism and purification before God as a part of the covenant people of God.

John's adoption of this expanded the idea to include Jew and non-Jew and refocused the act around repentance as the prerequisite for God's forgiveness.

The scriptural foundation for this mission of John lies on the words of the prophet Isaiah in 40:3-5 as Luke sets forth in vv. 4-6. Again, Luke has his own way of using the text from Isaiah as is reflected below:

Isaiah 40:3-5 (NRSV)

3 *A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.* 4 Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. 5 *Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."*

Luke 3:4-6

4 as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, "*The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.* 5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; 6 *and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."*

Mark 1:2-3

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; 3 *the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,"*

Matt. 3:3

3 This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, "*The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."*

chose to omit this material and to draw exclusively from the Isaiah text. Luke's term "all flesh" (πᾶσα σὰρξ), in contrast to Isaiah's "all people," signals a universal scope that flows through both the gospel and Acts.

Just a casual glance reflects the distinctive way each gospel writer chose to use the Isaiah text. Luke builds off his Markan source but then extends the quote to include more of the text from Isaiah. The phrase, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way," in Mark 1:2 actually comes from Mal. 3:1 and is used by Mark to introduce the material from Isaiah. Luke and Matthew

The graphic historical background in the OT text of a city making preparations for a royal visit from their king provides the metaphorical backdrop to depict the ministry of John as the one whose mission is to get the people ready for the coming of Jesus as the Son of God. This OT principle is thus seen as the basis for John's message on baptism and repentance.

The connection of this to us today? These verses certainly inform us of the mission of this NT character John and thus help us understand the building of bridges between the Old and New Testaments by the writers of the NT documents. The spiritual principle of repentance and its connection to divine forgiveness of sin remains a timeless principle of God's

Word. Forgiveness of sin grows out of genuine repentance. That truth never changes. Although Christian baptism moves beyond John's, an essential truth remains constant. Outward expression of repentance in conversion remains important in Christian experience, just as it was in John's message.

b. His Message, vv. 7-14

Greek NT

3:7 Ἐλεγεν οὖν τοῖς ἐκπορευομένοις ὄχλοις βαπτισθῆναι ὑπ' αὐτοῦ, Γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν, τίς ὑπέδειξεν ὑμῖν φυγεῖν ἀπὸ τῆς μελλούσης ὀργῆς; 3:8 ποιήσατε οὖν καρποὺς ἀξίους τῆς μετανοίας καὶ μὴ ἄρξησθε λέγειν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς, Πατέρα ἔχομεν τὸν Ἀβραάμ. λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι δύναται ὁ θεὸς ἐκ τῶν λίθων τούτων ἐγεῖραι τέκνα τῷ Ἀβραάμ. 3:9 ἤδη δὲ καὶ ἡ ἀξίνη πρὸς τὴν ρίζαν τῶν δένδρων κεῖται· πᾶν οὖν δένδρον μὴ ποιῶν καρπὸν καλὸν ἐκκόπτεται καὶ εἰς πῦρ βάλλεται. 3:10 Καὶ ἐπηρώτων αὐτὸν οἱ ὄχλοι λέγοντες, Τί οὖν ποιήσωμεν; 3:11 ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς, Ὁ ἔχων δύο χιτῶνας μεταδότω τῷ μὴ ἔχοντι, καὶ ὁ ἔχων βρώματα ὁμοίως ποιείτω. 3:12 ἦλθον δὲ καὶ τελῶναι βαπτισθῆναι καὶ εἶπαν πρὸς αὐτόν, Διδάσκαλε, τί ποιήσωμεν; 3:13 ὁ δὲ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς, Μηδὲν πλέον παρὰ τὸ διατεταγμένον ὑμῖν πράσσετε. 3:14 ἐπηρώτων δὲ αὐτὸν καὶ στρατευόμενοι λέγοντες, Τί ποιήσωμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς; καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Μηδένα

NASB

7 So he began saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 "Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. 9 "Indeed the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." 10 And the crowds were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?" 11 And he would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise." 12 And some tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" 13 And he said to them, "Collect no more than what you have been ordered to." 14 Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, "And what about us, what shall we

NRSV

7 John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 9 Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." 10 And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" 11 In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." 12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" 13 He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." 14 Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and

NLT

7 Here is a sample of John's preaching to the crowds that came for baptism: "You brood of snakes! Who warned you to flee God's coming judgment? 8 Prove by the way you live that you have really turned from your sins and turned to God. Don't just say, 'We're safe – we're the descendants of Abraham.' That proves nothing. God can change these stones here into children of Abraham. 9 Even now the ax of God's judgment is poised, ready to sever your roots. Yes, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire." 10 The crowd asked, "What should we do?" 11 John replied, "If you have two coats, give one to the poor. If you have food, share it with those who are hungry." 12 Even corrupt tax collectors came to be baptized and asked, "Teacher, what should we do?" 13 "Show your honesty," he replied. "Make sure you collect no more taxes than the Roman government requires you to." 14 "What should we do?" asked some soldiers.

διασεΐσητε μηδὲ
συκοφαντήσητε καὶ
ἀρκεῖσθε τοῖς ὄψωνίοις
ὑμῶν.

do?" And he said to them,
"Do not take money from
anyone by force, or ac-
cuse anyone falsely, and
be content with your
wages."

be satisfied with your
wages."

John replied, "Don't extort
money, and don't accuse
people of things you
know they didn't do. And
be content with your
pay."

Notes:

After the introductory commissioning narrative in vv. 1-6, Luke turns to summarizing the basics that typified John's ministry throughout its duration until his arrest and execution by Herod Antipas. The exact duration of John's ministry cannot be determined with precision. But we know that it began sometime before that of Jesus and evidently not too long before, probably no more than a year. The terminus point in John's death came sometime before the end of Jesus' ministry in Galilee, which was about two plus years into Jesus' three year public ministry. In all likelihood John's ministry lasted about two to three years. One amazing implication of this is the realization that both men spent thirty plus years getting ready for a two to three year ministry before being executed.

The internal structure of vv. 7-14 is clear. Luke provides a generalized summation of the content of John's preaching in the single Greek sentence in vv. 7-9. The response of the people to that message is provided in v. 10 and then John's reply to that response in v. 11. The second section in vv. 12-14 brings two examples of that response with instruction: tax collectors and soldiers. Thus Luke moves from the general to the specific. Yet, his language stays focused on typifying summation of repetitive patterns rather than isolated historical events.

What did John preach? Answer: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." It was a message of coming divine wrath. Finding escape from this centered on repentance. But repentance had to be genu-

ine. And this could only be demonstrated by holy living growing out of repentance. No claim of escape from God's wrath could be based on racial connection back to Abraham. Instead, God stood poised to "chop down" every non-fruit bearing person, that is, every individual not demonstrating genuine repentance through holy living ("good fruit").

At this point Matthew and Luke use common material from the so-called Q source. Matthew provides one deviation from Luke in identifying the primary targeted audience for this stern words as the Pharisees and Sadducees. Luke stresses these words more generally with the "crowds" as the listening audience. But Matthew

focuses on the religious hypocrisy of these two groups of Jewish religious leaders, who also gain special focus in Matthew's gospel generally.

Those hearing this message typically responded with the question "What shall we do?" (Τί ποιήσωμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς;). That is, what should repentance lead us to do in order to prove that our repentance is genuine? John's standard reply to the generalized question was "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise" (Ὁ ἔχων δύο χιτῶνας μεταδώτω τῷ μὴ ἔχοντι, καὶ ὁ ἔχων βρώματα ὁμοίως ποιείτω). The generalized "fruits of repentance" set forth here are acts of benelovence: giving food and clothing to those in need.

John Nolland (WBC, Logos Systems) offers some insight against the larger cultural setting of John's day:

Despite John's own detachment from society, he does not stand over against normal life in society. Unlike the classical OT prophets, he does not address the society as such, so there is not here a fundamental questioning of the structures of society, nor the



exposure of unjust class behavior, nor a call for community action. However, over against Qumran apocalypticism, there is no call to leave society for a holy remnant, nor to leave behind the normal engagements of life for an exclusive attention to holy matters. Repentance bears its fruit in relationships between individuals in society. This focus on the individual in relationship to others is also characteristic of Jesus, who does, however, also address the society as a whole (Luke 13:6–9, 34–35; 19:41–44, 45–46; 21:5–24).

From this generalized pattern in John's ministry, Luke moves exclusively to provide two samples of more specific kinds of question/answer patterns. These illustrate more precisely the meaning of John's admonitions to bearing fruit.

To the tax collectors' question on what they should do John typically replied: "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you" (Μηδὲν πλέον παρὰ τὸ διατεταγμένον ὑμῖν πράσσετε). For these tax collectors living on the fringe of Jewish society, fruits of repentance meant dealing justly and equitably with those who paid taxes. The notoriously unjust tax collecting system imposed by the Romans on those living in Palestine encouraged fraud and excessive taxation. In essence the Romans told the contracted tax collectors, we want xx amount of dollars and whatever you collect beyond that with the backing of our soldiers you pocket for yourselves. John demanded of these that principles of fairness and justice guide their work of collecting taxes.

To the soldiers with the same question, his reply was "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages." (Μηδένα διασεΐσητε μηδὲ συκοφαντήσητε καὶ ἀρκεῖσθε τοῖς ὀψωνίοις ὑμῶν). The Roman government paid horribly bad wages to its soldiers all over the empire. Often

they resorted to plundering the local people, frequently resorting to trumped up legal charges against their victims in order to do it "legitimately." John demands a cessation of such activity, along with a contentment over their low wages. Such would not be easy, but was nonetheless demanded if repentance was authentic.

This view of the soldiers is not widely adopted by modern scholars. More often the soldiers are seen as Jewish rather than Gentile. If Jewish, then one or two possibilities exist. They were possibly a part of the temple police under the authority of the Sanhedrin and the high priest. Perhaps, more likely, they were soldiers employed as a "private security" force by the tax collectors to enforce the gathering of taxes. But Luke's depiction could fit either the Roman or Jewish assumptions.

Luke's two examples reach out to the fringes of society of that day. Thus he focuses on those looked upon with scorn by the religious authorities as representatives of those seeking to genuinely turn from their sins into a life of holy living.

Connections? For one thing, demonstrations of true repentance can take many forms, and they are not detached from the workplace. Claiming Abraham as the basis of escaping God's coming wrath in that day roughly equates with claiming church membership in our day. Neither amount to anything before God in final judgment. The far more important aspect is genuine repentance, and that means changed living once we repent. At the heart of the concept of fruits here is merciful and just treatment of other people. And in the two examples Luke reminds us that such treatment is vitally connected to our jobs, no matter what the atmosphere or acceptable patterns of unjust treatment may be.

c. His Mission, vv. 15-20

Greek NT

3:15 Προσδοκῶντος δὲ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ διαλογιζομένων πάντων ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν περὶ τοῦ Ἰωάννου, μήποτε αὐτὸς εἶη ὁ Χριστός, 3:16 ἀπεκρίνατο λέγων πᾶσιν ὁ Ἰωάννης, Ἐγὼ μὲν ὕδατι βαπτίζω ὑμᾶς· ἔρχεται δὲ ὁ ἰσχυρότερός μου, οὗ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἰκανὸς λύσαι τὸν ἰμάντα τῶν

NASB

15 Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ, 16 John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong

NRSV

15 As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, 16 John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will

NLT

15 Everyone was expecting the Messiah to come soon, and they were eager to know whether John might be the Messiah. 16 John answered their questions by saying, "I baptize with water; but someone is coming soon who is greater than I am – so much greater that I am not even worthy to be his

ὕποδημάτων αὐτοῦ· αὐτὸς ὑμᾶς βαπτίσει ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρὶ· 3:17 οὗ τὸ πτύον ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ διακαθαίρει τὴν ἄλωνα αὐτοῦ καὶ συναγαγεῖν τὸν σῖτον εἰς τὴν ἀποθήκην αὐτοῦ, τὸ δὲ ἄχυρον κατακαύσει πυρὶ ἀσβέστῳ. 3:18 Πολλὰ μὲν οὖν καὶ ἕτερα παρακαλῶν εὐηγγελίζετο τὸν λαόν. 3:19 ὁ δὲ Ἡρώδης ὁ τετραάρχης, ἐλεγχόμενος ὑπ' αὐτοῦ περὶ Ἡρωδιάδος τῆς γυναικὸς τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ καὶ περὶ πάντων ὧν ἐποίησεν πονηρῶν ὁ Ἡρώδης, 3:20 προσέθηκεν καὶ τοῦτο ἐπὶ πᾶσιν [καὶ] κατέκλεισεν τὸν Ἰωάννην ἐν φυλακῇ.

Notes:

The summarizing narrative continues in vv. 15-20 but with a different focus. The single lengthy Greek sentence making up vv. 15-17 sets up John as responding to speculation about whether he might be the expected Jewish Messiah. Luke portrays this discussion as intense and producing divided opinion (v. 15). John's response in vv. 16b-17 stresses that John is not the Messiah since he is in a secondary role to the "more powerful one who is yet to come." The extent of John's subservient role is pictured in two ways. John is so unworthy that he doesn't consider himself good enough to do the simple duty of a slave in untying the sandals of this mighty one. Secondly, John baptized with water, but that one will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. His power is then portrayed in terms in harvest time as a metaphor of divine judgment of humanity.

Again Luke combines a couple of sources for his depiction. His introduction of messianic expectation (v. 15) is unique to him, but the slave metaphor and baptism comparison comes from Mark, and Matthew makes use of these as well. But the harvest metaphor of divine judgment reflects the common use of Q materials by both Matthew and Luke. Luke then uniquely adds the summarizing statement in verse 18: "So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people." Inter-

of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 "His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." 18 So with many other exhortations he preached the gospel to the people. 19 But when Herod the tetrarch was reprimanded by him because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the wicked things which Herod had done, 20 Herod also added this to them all: he locked John up in prison.

baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." 18 So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people. 19 But Herod the ruler, who had been rebuked by him because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the evil things that Herod had done, 20 added to them all by shutting up John in prison.

slave. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. 17 He is ready to separate the chaff from the grain with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, storing the grain in his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire." 18 John used many such warnings as he announced the Good News to the people. 19 John also publicly criticized Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee, for marrying Herodias, his brother's wife, and for many other wrongs he had done. 20 So Herod put John in prison, adding this sin to his many others.

estingly, the only place with the fourth gospel draws [common materials](#) from the synoptic gospels in introducing John is the use of the slave metaphor (cf. [Jnn. 1:24-28](#)).

For Luke these patterns of ministry by John produce an inevitable outcome: John's arrest and imprisonment (vv. 19-20). Luke and Matthew (Mt. 14:3-4) follow their Markan source (Mk. 6:17-18) in attributing the specific cause of the arrest to jealousy by Herodias, Herod's wife. John had publicly denounced her leaving Herod Philip, Herod Antipas' brother, in order to marry Antipas. In order to do this Herod Antipas divorced his previous wife, a daughter of King Aretas of Arabia. This action led Herod into a disastrous war with this enraged father. The Jewish historian, Josephus, provides a detailed description in his *Antiquities of the Jews* (xviii.5.1.2). Later John would be beheaded in a moment of drunken madness by Herod as is described in the synoptics toward the end of Jesus' time in Galilee.

Applications? John sets an example of humility in the midst of substantial opportunity to go the opposite direction toward arrogance. Popularity did not turn his head from God's mission. But that mission also led to imprisonment and a horrible death as well. In that, John challenges us to focus on our Lord and not be deterred from following Him regardless.

Malachai 3:1-4:6 (NRSV)

3.1 See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. 2 But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; 3 he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. 4 Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years. 5 Then I will draw near to you for judgment; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien, and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts. 6 For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, have not perished.

7 Ever since the days of your ancestors you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. But you say, "How shall we return?" 8 Will anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing me! But you say, "How are we robbing you?" In your tithes and offerings! 9 You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me—the whole nation of you! 10 Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing. 11 I will rebuke the locust for you, so that it will not destroy the produce of your soil; and your vine in the field shall not be barren, says the Lord of hosts. 12 Then all nations will count you happy, for you will be a land of delight, says the Lord of hosts.

13 You have spoken harsh words against me, says the Lord. Yet you say, "How have we spoken against you?" 14 You have said, "It is vain to serve God. What do we profit by keeping his command or by going about as mourners before the Lord of hosts? 15 Now we count the arrogant happy; evildoers not only prosper, but when they put God to the test they escape." 16 Then those who revered the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord took note and listened, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who revered the Lord and thought on his name. 17 They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, my special possession on the day when I act, and I will spare them as parents spare their children who serve them. 18 Then once more you shall see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.

4.1 See, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. 2 But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. 3 And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the Lord of hosts.

4 Remember the teaching of my servant Moses, the statutes and ordinances that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. *5 Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. 6 He will turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents, so that I will not come and strike the land with a curse.*

Greek NT

3:1 Ἐν ἔτει δὲ πεντεκαίδεκάτῳ τῆς ἡγεμονίας Τιβερίου Καίσαρος, ἡγεμονεύοντος Ποντίου Πιλάτου τῆς Ἰουδαίας, καὶ τετρααρχοῦντος τῆς Γαλιλαίας Ἡρώδου, Φιλίππου δὲ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ τετρααρχοῦντος τῆς Ἰτουραίας καὶ Τραχωνίτιδος χώρας, καὶ Λυσανίου τῆς Ἀβιληνῆς τετρααρχοῦντος, 3:2 ἐπὶ ἀρχιερέως Ἄννα καὶ Καϊάφα, ἐγένετο ῥῆμα θεοῦ ἐπὶ Ἰωάννην τὸν Ζαχαρίου υἱὸν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ. 3:3 καὶ ἦλθεν εἰς πᾶσαν [τὴν] περιχώρον τοῦ Ἰορδάνου κηρύσσων βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφειν ἁμαρτιῶν, 3:4 ὡς γέγραπται ἐν βίβλῳ λόγων Ἡσαΐου τοῦ προφήτου, *Φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, Ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου, εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ.* 3:5 πᾶσα φάραγξ πληρωθήσεται καὶ πᾶν ὄρος καὶ βουνὸς ταπεινωθήσεται, καὶ ἔσται τὰ σκολιὰ εἰς εὐθείαν καὶ αἱ τραχεῖαι εἰς ὁδοὺς λείας. 3:6 καὶ ὄψεται πᾶσα σὰρξ τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ.

3:7 Ἔλεγεν οὖν τοῖς ἐκπορευομένοις ὄχλοις βαπτισθῆναι ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ, Γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν, τίς ὑπέδειξεν ὑμῖν φυγεῖν ἀπὸ τῆς μελλούσης ὀργῆς; 3:8 ποιήσατε οὖν καρποὺς ἀξίους τῆς μετανοίας καὶ μὴ ἄρξησθε λέγειν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς, Πατέρα ἔχομεν τὸν Ἀβραάμ. λέγω γὰρ

NASB

1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, 2 in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness. 3 And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; 4 as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT. 5 'EVERY RAVINE WILL BE FILLED, AND EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL WILL BE BROUGHT LOW; THE CROOKED WILL BECOME STRAIGHT, AND THE ROUGH ROADS SMOOTH; 6 AND R153 ALL FLESH WILL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD.'"

7 So he began saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 "Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to your-

NRSV

1 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, 2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. 3 He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, 4 as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; 6 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

7 John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 9 Even now the ax is lying

NLT

1 It was now the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, the Roman emperor. Pilate was governor over Judea; Herod Antipas was ruler over Galilee; his brother Philip was ruler over Iturea and Trachonitis; Lysanias was ruler over Abilene. 2 Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests. At this time a message from God came to John son of Zechariah, who was living out in the wilderness. 3 Then John went from place to place on both sides of the Jordan River, preaching that people should be baptized to show that they had turned from their sins and turned to God to be forgiven. 4 Isaiah had spoken of John when he said, "He is a voice shouting in the wilderness: 'Prepare a pathway for the Lord's coming! Make a straight road for him! 5 Fill in the valleys, and level the mountains and hills! Straighten the curves, and smooth out the rough places! 6 And then all people will see the salvation sent from God.'"

7 Here is a sample of John's preaching to the crowds that came for baptism: "You brood of snakes! Who warned you to flee God's coming judgment? 8 Prove by the way you live that you have really turned from your sins and turned to God. Don't just say, 'We're safe – we're the

ὕμῃν ὅτι δύναται ὁ θεὸς ἐκ τῶν λίθων τούτων ἐγεῖραι τέκνα τῷ Ἀβραάμ. 3:9 ἤδη δὲ καὶ ἡ ἀξίνη πρὸς τὴν ῥίζαν τῶν δένδρων κεῖται· πᾶν οὖν δένδρον μὴ ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλὸν ἐκκόπτεται καὶ εἰς πῦρ βάλλεται. 3:10 Καὶ ἐπηρώτων αὐτὸν οἱ ὄχλοι λέγοντες, Τί οὖν ποιήσωμεν; 3:11 ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς, Ὁ ἔχων δύο χιτῶνας μεταδότω τῷ μὴ ἔχοντι, καὶ ὁ ἔχων βρώματα ὁμοίως ποιείτω. 3:12 ἦλθον δὲ καὶ τελῶναι βαπτισθῆναι καὶ εἶπαν πρὸς αὐτόν, Διδάσκαλε, τί ποιήσωμεν; 3:13 ὁ δὲ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς, Μηδὲν πλέον παρὰ τὸ διατεταγμένον ὑμῖν πράσσετε. 3:14 ἐπηρώτων δὲ αὐτὸν καὶ στρατευόμενοι λέγοντες, Τί ποιήσωμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς; καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Μηδένα διασεισητε μηδὲ συκοφαντήσητε καὶ ἀρκεῖσθε τοῖς ὄψωνίοις ὑμῶν.

3:15 Προσδοκῶντος δὲ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ διαλογομένων πάντων ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν περὶ τοῦ Ἰωάννου, μήποτε αὐτὸς εἶη ὁ Χριστός, 3:16 ἀπεκρίνατο λέγων πᾶσιν ὁ Ἰωάννης, Ἐγὼ μὲν ὕδατι βαπτίζω ὑμᾶς· ἔρχεται δὲ ὁ ἰσχυρότερός μου, οὗ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἰκανὸς λῦσαι τὸν ἱμάντα τῶν ὑποδημάτων αὐτοῦ· αὐτὸς ὑμᾶς βαπτίσει ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρί· 3:17 οὗ τὸ πτύον ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ

selves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. 9 Indeed the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." 10 And the crowds were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?" 11 And he would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise." 12 And some tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" 13 And he said to them, "Collect no more than what you have been ordered to." 14 Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, "And what about us, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages."

15 Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ, 16 John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His

at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." 10 And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" 11 In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." 12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" 13 He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." 14 Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

15 As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, 16 John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." 18 So, with many other

descendants of Abraham.' That proves nothing. God can change these stones here into children of Abraham. 9 Even now the ax of God's judgment is poised, ready to sever your roots. Yes, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire." 10 The crowd asked, "What should we do?" 11 John replied, "If you have two coats, give one to the poor. If you have food, share it with those who are hungry." 12 Even corrupt tax collectors came to be baptized and asked, "Teacher, what should we do?" 13 "Show your honesty," he replied. "Make sure you collect no more taxes than the Roman government requires you to." 14 "What should we do?" asked some soldiers. John replied, "Don't extort money, and don't accuse people of things you know they didn't do. And be content with your pay."

15 Everyone was expecting the Messiah to come soon, and they were eager to know whether John might be the Messiah. 16 John answered their questions by saying, "I baptize with water; but someone is coming soon who is greater than I am – so much greater that I am not even worthy to be his slave. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and

διακαθᾶραι τὴν ἄλωνα αὐτοῦ καὶ συναγαγεῖν τὸν σῖτον εἰς τὴν ἀποθήκην αὐτοῦ, τὸ δὲ ἄχυρον κατακαύσει πυρὶ ἀσβέστω. 3:18 Πολλὰ μὲν οὖν καὶ ἕτερα παρακαλῶν εὐηγγελίζετο τὸν λαόν. 3:19 ὁ δὲ Ἡρώδης ὁ τετραάρχης, ἐλεγχόμενος ὑπ' αὐτοῦ περὶ Ἡρωδιάδος τῆς γυναικὸς τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ καὶ περὶ πάντων ὧν ἐποίησεν πονηρῶν ὁ Ἡρώδης, 3:20 προσέθηκεν καὶ τοῦτο ἐπὶ πᾶσιν [καὶ] κατέκλεισεν τὸν Ἰωάννην ἐν φυλακῇ.

sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 "His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." 18 So with many other exhortations he preached the gospel to the people. 19 But when Herod the tetrarch was reprimanded by him because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the wicked things which Herod had done, 20 Herod also added this to them all: he locked John up in prison.

exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people. 19 But Herod the ruler, who had been rebuked by him because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the evil things that Herod had done, 20 added to them all by shutting up John in prison.

with fire. 17 He is ready to separate the chaff from the grain with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, storing the grain in his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire." 18 John used many such warnings as he announced the Good News to the people. 19 John also publicly criticized Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee, for marrying Herodias, his brother's wife, and for many other wrongs he had done. 20 So Herod put John in prison, adding this sin to his many others.

Mt. 3:1-12

1 In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, 2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." 3 This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'" 4 Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, 6 and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

7 But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruit worthy of repentance. 9 Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 10 Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 11 'I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is

Mk. 1:1-8

1 The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 2 As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; 3 the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'" 4 John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. 8 I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Luke 3:1-20

1 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, 2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. 3 He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, 4 as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; 6 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'" "

7 John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 9

Jn. 1:19-28

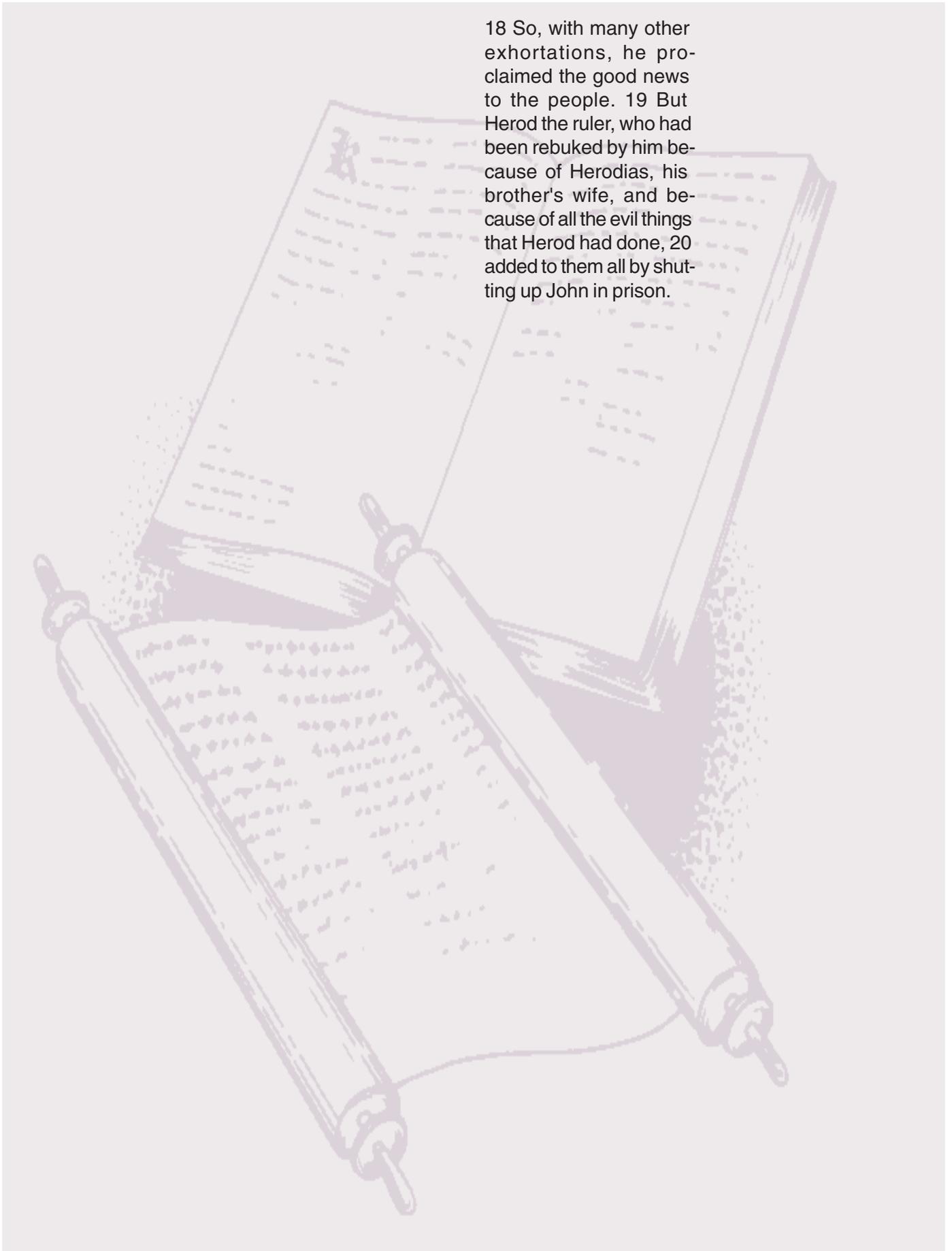
19 This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20 He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." 21 And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." 22 Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" 23 He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' " as the prophet Isaiah said. 24 Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. 25 They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" 26 John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, 27 the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." 28 This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." 10 And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" 11 In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." 12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" 13 He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." 14 Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

15 As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, 16 John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

18 So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people. 19 But Herod the ruler, who had been rebuked by him because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the evil things that Herod had done, 20 added to them all by shutting up John in prison.



Greek Text Diagram

3:1

δὲ

Ἐν ἔτει πεντεκαιδεκάτῳ

τῆς ἡγεμονίας Τιβερίου Καίσαρος,

ἡγεμονεύοντος Ποντίου Πιλάτου τῆς Ἰουδαίας,

καὶ

τετραρχοῦντος τῆς Γαλιλαίας

Ἡρώδου,

δὲ

Φιλίππου τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ

τετραρχοῦντος τῆς Ἰουραίας καὶ Τραχωνίτιδος χώρας,

καὶ

Λυσανίου τῆς Ἀβιληνῆς

τετραρχοῦντος,

3:2

ἐπὶ ἀρχιερέως Ἄννα καὶ Καϊάφα,

1

ἐγένετο ῥῆμα θεοῦ

ἐπὶ Ἰωάννην

τὸν Ζαχαρίου υἱὸν

ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ.

3:3

καὶ

2

ἦλθεν

εἰς πᾶσαν [τὴν] περίχωρον τοῦ Ἰορδάνου

κηρύσσων βάπτισμα

μετανοίας

εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν,

3:4

ὡς γέγραπται

ἐν βίβλῳ λόγων

Ἡσαΐου τοῦ προφήτου,

α

Φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ,

β

Ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου,

γ

εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ·

δ

3:5

πᾶσα φάραγξ πληρωθήσεται

καὶ

ε

πᾶν ὄρος καὶ βουνὸς ταπεινωθήσεται,

καὶ

ζ

ἔσται τὰ σκολιὰ εἰς εὐθείαν

καὶ

η

αἱ τραχεῖαι εἰς ὁδοὺς λείας·

3:6

καὶ

θ

ὄψεται πᾶσα σὰρξ τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ.

3:7

οὖν

3

Ἔλεγεν τοῖς ἐκπορευομένοις ὄχλοις

βαπτισθῆναι

ὑπ' αὐτοῦ,

Γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν,

ι

τίς ὑπέδειξεν ὑμῖν

φυγεῖν

ἀπὸ τῆς μελλούσης ὀργῆς;

3:8

κ

οὖν
ποιήσατε καρπούς
ἀξίους τῆς μετανοίας

λ

καὶ
μὴ ἄρξησθε λέγειν
ἐν ἑαυτοῖς,

μ

γὰρ
λέγω ὑμῖν
ἐκ τῶν λίθων τούτων
ὅτι δύναται ὁ θεὸς... ἐγεῖραι τέκνα
τῷ Ἀβραάμ.

3:9

ν

δὲ
ἤδη
καὶ
πρὸς τὴν ῥίζαν τῶν δένδρων
ἢ ἀξίνη... κεῖται·

ο

οὖν
μὴ ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλὸν

π

πάν δένδρον... ἐκκόπτεται
καὶ

εἰς πῦρ βάλλεται.

3:10

4

Καὶ
ἐπηρώτων αὐτὸν οἱ ὄχλοι
λέγοντες,

ξ

οὖν
Τί ποιήσωμεν;

3:11

5

δὲ
ἀποκριθεὶς
ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς,

ρ

Ὁ ἔχων δύο χιτῶνας
μεταδώτω τῷ μὴ ἔχοντι,

σ

καὶ
ὁ ἔχων βρώματα
ὁμοίως
ποιεῖτω.

3:12

6

δὲ
ἦλθον καὶ τελῶναι
βαπτισθῆναι
καὶ

7

εἶπαν
πρὸς αὐτόν,

τ

Διδάσκαλε,
τί ποιήσωμεν;

3:13
8

δὲ
ὁ εἶπεν
πρὸς αὐτούς,

Μηδὲν... πράσσετε.
πλέον παρὰ τὸ διατεταγμένον ὑμῖν

3:14
9

δὲ
ἐπηρώτων αὐτὸν καὶ στρατευόμενοι
λέγοντες,

Τί ποιήσωμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς;

10

καὶ
εἶπεν αὐτοῖς,

*Μηδένα διασεΐσητε
μηδὲ συκοφαντήσητε
καὶ
ἀρκεῖσθε τοῖς ὄψωνίοις ὑμῶν.*

3:15
11

δὲ
Προσδοκῶντος τοῦ λαοῦ
καὶ
διαλογιζομένων πάντων
ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν
περὶ τοῦ Ἰωάννου,
μήποτε αὐτὸς εἶη ὁ Χριστός,
ἀπεκρίνατο... ὁ Ἰωάννης,
λέγων πᾶσιν

Ἐγὼ μὲν ὕδατι βαπτίζω ὑμᾶς·

*δὲ
ἔρχεται ὁ ἰσχυρότερός μου,
οὗ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἰκανός*

λύσαι τὸν ἱμάντα
/-----|
τῶν ὑποδημάτων αὐτοῦ·

*αὐτὸς ὑμᾶς βαπτίσει
ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρὶ·*

3:17
12

οὗ τὸ πτύον... (ἐστίν)
ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ
διακαθᾶραι τὴν ἄλωνα αὐτοῦ
καὶ
συναγαγεῖν τὸν σῖτον
εἰς τὴν ἀποθήκην αὐτοῦ,

13

δὲ
*τὸ ἄχυρον κατακαύσει
πυρὶ ἀσβέστω.*

3:18
14

οὖν
Πολλὰ μὲν καὶ ἕτερα παρακαλῶν

12 εὐηγγελίζετο τὸν λαόν.

3:19-20

δὲ

ἐλεγχόμενος

ὑπ' αὐτοῦ

περὶ Ἡρῳδιάδος

τῆς γυναικὸς τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ

καὶ

περὶ πάντων

ἃς ἐποίησεν πονηρῶν ὁ Ἡρῳδῆς,

13 ὁ Ἡρῳδῆς...προσέθηκεν καὶ τοῦτο

ὁ τετραάρχης,

ἐπὶ πᾶσιν

[καὶ]

14 κατέκλεισεν τὸν Ἰωάννην

ἐν φυλακῇ.