

Some people had come to John to be baptized. 'You are like poisonous snakes,' he said to them. 'You think that just because you have Abraham as your ancestor you can get away with pretending to live good lives, and pretending to be sorry for the wrong that you do. But I tell you this: just as the farmer cuts down a tree that does not produce good fruit, so will you have no place with God, if you do not produce good fruit by the way that you live.'

The people asked John, 'What should we do to live a new life with God?'

He replied, 'If anyone has two coats, they must give one to someone with none; whoever has food, must share

it with someone who has nothing to eat.'

Some tax collectors came to be baptized and asked, 'What about us? What should we do?'



John said, 'Charge the right amount. Be honest.' *

Some soldiers asked him, 'What should we do?'

'Don't be bullies,' John told them. 'Treat people with respect, and be satisfied with the money you earn.'

People were getting excited, thinking that John might be the Messiah, * so John said to them, 'No. I baptize with water, but someone is coming who is more powerful than me. I'm not fit to undo the strap of his sandal. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with power from God, like fire. When he comes, he will sort out good from evil, like a farmer separates wheat seeds from the chaff, and his power will last for ever.'

So John the Baptist proclaimed the good news of God to the people. But King Herod, whom he had criticised for all the wrong things he had done, put John in prison.

Luke 3:7-18

* See *Share the Word*.