

Three Short Bible Books!

Philemon, 2 John, and 3 John

June 14-28

Class 3, Wednesday, June 28, 2023 (3 John)

“Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God.” 3 John 11

Interpretative Issues in 3 John

Authorship: Like 2 John, 3 John comes from “The elder.” I believe that it was the Apostle John near the end of his life.

Names: Unlike 2 John (with no names), three men are mentioned by name: Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius are otherwise unknown, but there are abundant hints of their character in the book itself.

Oddity: It is the only NT book that doesn’t mention Jesus by name, though He is referred to reverently.

General Outline of 2 John

Even more than 2 John, 3 John follows the standard letter writing form of the Greek-Roman world. The outline shows that form:

1. S _____ . 1-2

From “the elder” to “my dear friend Gaius” whom “I love in the truth.” Probably a double meaning. Gaius is truly loved and He walks in the truth.

Gaius was a common name and there are others of that name in the New Testament. There is no evidence that he is the same as those mentioned in Acts, 1 Corinthians, or Romans.

Verse 2 is a Christian version of a standard Latin phrase, which was used so often it was abbreviated—SVBEEV, “If you are well, that is good, I am well.” John makes it a prayer and shows concern not just for physical health but for Gaius’ soul.

2. R _____ . 3-4

Similar to 2 John—I rejoice that you are faithful; I have great joy knowing that my children are walking in the truth.

3. R _____ . 5-12

a. Thanks for your f _____ and h _____. 5-8

b. Warning about Diotrephes. (9-10)

i. He “I _____ . 9

ii. I will c _____ . 10

iii. He is a d _____ . 10

c. Exhortation to i _____ . 11

This was characteristic of John—who states things in black and white (antithesis) format. See 1 John 1:6; 2:3; 3:6; 4:7-8; and 4:20 for other examples.

d. Commendation of Demetrius, who was probably the one who c _____ . 12

4. P _____ . 12

Again, this is almost the same as in 2 John. I will come to you and talk face-to-face.

5. F _____ . 13

The friends here send their greetings; greet the friends there for us as well.

We have three favorable examples (the Elder, Gaius, and Demetrius) and one unfavorable example (Diotrephes.) Clearly, John believes church leaders should be faithful in person and faithful to the truth, hospitable, loving (especially to other believers), willing to help the faith beyond their own church, and have good reputations among believers. They must not be “church bosses” in their ministry!

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