

## 3 John

### 3 John Background

- Outline of 3 John
  - Greeting, 1.
  - Prayer for Gaius' posterity, 2.
  - Commends Gaius' godly walk, 3-4.
  - Commends Gaius' hospitality, 5-8.
  - Complaint against Diotrephes, 9-10.
  - Test of relation to God, worth of Demetrius, 11-12.
  - Conclusion, 13-14
- Author – identifies himself as “the elder”.
  - Though the word is *presbuteros*, he probably refers to his senior age.
  - Same opening as 2 John.
  - That John the apostle is the author is not disputed.
- Recipient – Gaius.
  - A Greek name – and not uncommon.
  - Acts 19:29 – a companion of Paul at Ephesus
  - Acts 20:4 – also with Paul in Macedonia; a resident of Derbe (see also Acts 14:6, 20; 16:1)
  - Romans 16:23 – at Corinth with Paul when Romans was written.  
***Host of the church.***
  - 1 Corinthians 1:14 – baptized by Paul.
  - Acts 19:29 – So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's travel companions.

- Acts 20:4 – And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia—also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.
- Romans 16:23 – Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you, and Quartus, a brother. (written from Corinth 57-58 AD)
- 1 Corinthians 1:14 – I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,

- Time and Place of Writing

- Ephesus is the likely place from which John wrote, based on his residence there for many years.
- Tradition is that John moved there with Mary, the mother of Jesus, probably after dispersion from Jerusalem.
- Dates ascribed range from 68-69 AD to 95-96 AD.



- Purpose

- To encourage Gaius in his good work and his hospitality and support of those who went forth teaching “for His name’s sake”.
- Recall the warning against “deceivers” in 2 John.

— Also to counter the opposition of Diotrephes (3 John 9).

- Three Men of 3<sup>rd</sup> John

- Gaius

- A dear friend of John, whom he prayed would prosper physically as well as he did spiritually (1-2)
    - A man of good reputation (3a)
    - A man who walked in the truth (3b)
    - A man who gave John great joy when hearing of his faithfulness (4)
    - A man who was hospitable toward all (5-6a)
    - A man John encouraged to continue supporting gospel preachers (6b-8)

- Diotrephes

- A man who loved to have pre-eminence (9)
    - Self-promoter -- he strove to be first - 3 Jn 9a
    - A man who was insubordinate -- he would not receive the [authority of] apostles (9b)
    - A man who spoke malicious words (10a)
    - A man who was malicious - he would not receive certain brethren, and cast out other brethren (10b)
    - A man whose character serves as a warning: “he who does evil has not seen God” (11b)

- Demetrius

- Demetrius is of good reputation – 12.
      - from all the brethren – 12
      - from the truth itself -12 (he walked in it)

—from John and the apostles - 12

- Demetrius is an example of good – 11.

- Other Notes

- It has been suggested that Gaius was a member of the church that met in the house of the “elect lady” of 2 John, but **a** Gaius was a host of the church in Corinth (Rom. 16:23).
- This is a personal letter. It contains some doctrine, but, among the things we may learn from it we get a glimpse into lives of members of the early church.
- Remember that 35+ years have passed since Paul wrote that Gaius was a host of the church in Corinth.

### 3 John 1-4

- 1 The Elder, To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth: 2 Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. 3 For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

### 3 John 1-4 Notes

- elder (*presbuteros*) - probably refers to age rather than office
- prosper (*euodoō*) – Verse 2 closes with “just as your soul prospers”. The word is used for financial prosperity, but John also ties in spiritual prosperity.
- health (*hugiainō*) – literally, to be well in body; sometimes used figuratively as uncorrupted (well in soul). Jesus makes the same connection.
  - Luke 5:31-32 – 31 Jesus answered and said to them, “Those who are **well** have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”
- I rejoiced greatly when brethren came ...

- In verse 4 John states a reason for such joy.
  - I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.
- Some Questions ...
  - Who were the brethren who came?
  - Where was Gaius when he showed hospitality to the traveling evangelists?
  - Was Demetrius among the evangelists, and was he the one Gaius wanted to welcome but Diotrephes opposed?
- Some reasoned answers, though not verified explicitly in scripture:
  - The brethren who brought news to John were likely travelling evangelists who had experienced good from Gaius and evil from Diotrephes.
  - A Gaius was in Corinth; probably a different Gaius in Asia Minor (Derbe). *But, 35+ years may have passed since Paul wrote Romans.*
  - Demetrius was probably among the evangelists, and probably the one with a 1<sup>st</sup>-hand report of Gaius and Diotrephes.
  - May not be the same Demetrius (silversmith) of Acts 19:24. (If they were the same, then Demetrius the silversmith would have to have obeyed the gospel and changed his occupation).
- 3b and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth.
  - These traveling evangelists brought a good report about Demetrius – that he was holding to the truth.
  - walk (*peripateō*) – literally, to walk about; figuratively, how one conducts his life.
- 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.
  - 1<sup>st</sup>-century disciples knew the truth. They had the testimony given by the apostles, so they were not needing to “find the truth”. But,

more than that, they conducted their lives according to what they had heard and what they knew to be the truth.

### 3 John 5-8

- **5** Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, **6** who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well, **7** because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles. **8** We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.

### 3 John 5-8 Notes

- **5-6a** Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, ...
  - brethren (*adelphos*)
  - strangers (*xenos*) – literally: alien, stranger, foreigner. The English word xenophobia stems from this. In this context, it is used for the traveling evangelists who have testified about Gaius.
- **6b-7** ... If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well, because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles.
  - send them forward (*propempō*) – literally, to send ahead; implied, give aid, accompany. Help with food and other necessities; even accompany them.
    - 2 Corinthians 1:16b – ... and be helped by you on my way to Judea.
    - Titus 3:13 - Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing.
    - 1 Corinthians 9:9-10 – **9** For it is written in the law of Moses, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE AN OX WHILE IT TREADS OUT THE GRAIN." Is it oxen God is concerned about? **10** Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope.

- 6b-7 ... in a manner worthy of God, ...
  - Worthy of God ... indicates that Gaius was to go the whole way in his hospitality. It meant, "to help on one's journey with food, money, by arranging for companions, and providing means of travel." "Send forward" was used as a term of early Christian missions, implying the assumption of financial responsibility for departing missionaries.
  - There is a distinction to be made.
  - 2 John 10-11 - 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; 11 for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.
- 6b-7 you will do well, because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles.
  - A good work for which Gaius (and *we-us*) do well.
  - These have been proven to walk in the truth.
  - What they are doing is for the glory of Christ
  - They were not taking up collection among the Gentiles to whom they preached.
- 8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.
  - When such people are aided, their helpers (*we-us*) become fellow-workers with them, thus sharing in the rewards of their labors.



### 3 John 9-10

- 9 I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. 10 Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.

#### 3 John 9-10 Notes

- 9 I wrote to the church, ...
- I have written something to the church (ESV)
- I wrote something to the church (NASB)
  - A letter written to the church of which Gaius & Diotrephes were both members, but no evidence has been found for such a letter.
  - **Something** does not appear in all translations.
  - Possibly a letter of commendation for the traveling missionaries to carry with them.
- 9 ... but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us.
  - loves to have the preeminence (*philoprōteuō*)
    - fond of being first, ambitious (to be first).
    - From *philos*, love for a friend or associate, and *prōtos*, foremost (in time, place, order or importance), chief.
  - does not receive us – does not accept what we (apostles) say.
- 10 Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. ...
  - if I come – v. 14 but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face.
  - call to mind (*hupomimnēskō*) – from *hupo*, through and *mimnēskō*,



remind, recall to mind, remember.

— prating (*phluareō*) - to be a babbler or trifler, berate.

- Not unlike a political campaign: the one who wants to be first will berate his opposition.

— malicious (*ponēros*) - evil, hurtful.

— It is, *unfortunately*, not uncommon for one who wants to be first to attack the opposition maliciously.

— Diotrephes was “bad news”.

- **10b** ... And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.

— content (*arkeō*) - be content, be enough, suffice, be sufficient.

- Like the fire, which never says, “Enough!” (Proverbs 30:16)

— does not receive the brethren – the opposite of Demetrius.

— How Diotrephes got such authority is not known.

— There were members who wished to receive the traveling evangelists.

— putting them out of the church – The grammar indicates that it was the helpful members who were put out of the church – disfellowshipped, and I believe that is correct.

— Some think it applies to the evangelists.

— Either way, Diotrephes is still “bad news”.

### 3 John 11-12

- **11** Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God. **12** Demetrius has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true.

### 3 John 11-12 Notes

- **11** Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.
  - John has provided examples:
    - of evil – Diotrephes,
    - and good – Demetrius.
  - Don't follow the example of Diotrephes.
  - Don't imitate Diotrephes because his works are not of God.
  - 1 John 3:6-7 – **6** Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. **7** Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.
- **12** Demetrius has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true.
  - Demetrius is an example of good, to be imitated.
  - Who are other good examples to imitate?

### 3 John 13-14

- **13** I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink; **14** but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face. Peace to you. Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

### 3 John 13-14 Notes

- **13** I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink;
  - The conclusion here is the same as that of the Second Epistle; and possibly the journey contemplated in both is the same.
  - Seems to indicate that at least two of these letters were written "in quick succession".

- 14 but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face. ...
  - Same as in 2 John.
  - 2 John 1:12 Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.
- 14 ... Greet the friends by name.
  - by name - as used here is found nowhere else in the New Testament, except in John 10:3
  - John 10:3 To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep **by name** and leads them out.

### 3 John - Review Questions

- What can be known of Gaius?
- What degree of certainty can you assign to the identity of Gaius?
- What is the likely date for the writing of 3<sup>rd</sup> John?
- What three-fold purpose would you give to the writing of 3 John?
- What is John's prayer for Gaius"? (2)
- What is John's source of rejoicing concerning Gaius? (3-4)
- How is the word "elder" used in the New Testament?
- How is the word "strangers" used in this letter?
- What does "send them forward" entail?
- Describe a "manner worthy of God".
- How does it benefit us to "send them forward in a manner worthy of God"?
- What problems do you see in the case of Diotrephes?
- Who are good examples to imitate? In this letter? Elsewhere in N.T.?