

INTRODUCTION TO 3 JOHN

WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE TRUTH

“We ought therefore to show hospitality to such people so that we may work together for the truth.” (8)

Author, Date, and Place of Writing

The author identifies himself as “The elder.” The style of writing and the contents of the letter is very similar to that of 1,2 John. Most likely John wrote 3 John from Ephesus sometime in the A.D. 90’s.

Recipients

The letter is addressed to “my dear friend Gaius.” While 1 John was circulated to churches in general, and 2 John is addressed to a local church, 3 John is to an individual. It is a personal letter to someone John knew very well and recognized to be of good influence among the church community.

Genre

3 John is an epistle which follows the general convention for letters written in the first century A.D., with a greeting, body and closing.

Occasion and Purpose

Some itinerant evangelists were preaching the gospel truth. But they were not welcomed by Diotrephes, who “loved to be first,” among the church leadership. Diotrephes spread malicious nonsense about genuine gospel workers and forbid showing hospitality to them--even putting out church members who did so. John warned his friend Gaius to be careful with Diotrephes, and indicated he would deal with him later (10a). John appealed to Gaius--who was faithful to walk in the truth--to show hospitality to genuine itinerant preachers, including Demetrius. Demetrius was well spoken of by everyone, and probably carried this letter. John encouraged working

together for the truth. While in 2 John hospitality to false teachers was discouraged, in 3 John hospitality to genuine gospel workers was encouraged.

Main Theme

John's main purpose is to encourage working together for the truth. In order to do this, he warns against those like Diotrephes, whose narcissistic attitude is against the gospel truth and gospel workers. At the same time John promotes those who faithfully walk in the truth, like Gaius and Demetrius, and urges them to work together for the truth--that is for the sake of Jesus' name.

Purpose of our Study

The church universal must learn to work together for the truth. Christians need to welcome anyone who is a genuine gospel worker in the name of Jesus, and to warn against anyone who opposes the gospel truth.

Outline of 3 John

- I. Greetings and Prayer (1-2)
- II. Commendations and requests of Gaius (3-8)
 - A. Commended for walking in the truth
 - B. Commended for faithful service of God's people
 - C. Request to show hospitality to itinerant preachers
- III. Warning about Diotrephes (9-10)
- IV. Discerning good and evil (11)
- V. Welcome Demetrius (12)
- VI. Farewell (13-14)