

3 John

Commentary used: *Gospel Advocate NT Commentary (Peter, John, Jude)*, Guy N. Woods

Introduction

- John did not use his name in this book either – a characteristic of his humility
- He identified himself only as “*the elder*,” a position of honor and respect
- Probably written from Ephesus in 90’s A.D. – John would have been an old man
- Two themes:
 1. To encourage the support of faithful missionaries
 2. To put a stop to a man who had become a church dictator

3 John 1

V1 – Gaius – quite a few men were named Gaius in New Testament (see a Bible dictionary) – a very common name in First Century (similar to John or Bill today)

- John’s relationship with Gaius?** Older Christian to younger Christian
- Gaius probably was not elder or deacon, “just” a member of the church, faithful, possibly wealthy, and in a position to help missionaries
- Identify: “*whom I love in truth*” – see *2 John 1*
- Same expression John used with the chosen lady
- So a friendly letter to younger Christian man

3 John 2-8 – Message to Gaius

V2 – the prayer of John for Gaius

- What did John pray for?** That Gaius might prosper and be in good health
- Is it Scriptural to pray for material prosperity?** Yes, if we are using it in right way (Gaius was, as we shall see in moment)
- Can we pray for good health?** Yes, again if we pray with right motives
- Matthew 6.33* – *Seek first his kingdom and his righteous and all these things will be added to you*
- The key to John’s prayer: last phrase – “*just as your soul prospers*”
- We should be willing to pray: “Lord, if my possessions are keeping me from being a faithful Christian, then remove these possessions from me”
- Are we willing to pray that prayer?**

V3 – Was John happy or sad about Gaius? Happy

- Why?** Brethren had told John about Gaius walking in the truth
- Notice: walking in truth

V4 – What made John happiest in life? To hear about his “*children*” who were “*walking in truth*”

- Explain: “children”?** Probably not physical, but maybe those John had baptized
- It is a great thrill to baptize someone into Lord’s body – you worry about that person, lose sleep sometimes, and do all possible to see that the person grows and doesn’t fall away

Read *Gospel Advocate NT Commentary (Peter, John, Jude)*, p. 359-360

V 5 – The key to this section

- What did John compliment Gaius for?** Doing things for the brethren (especially when they are strangers)
- Someone (probably Diotrephes) must have criticized Gaius for housing faithful brethren
- Gaius must have written to John for advice
- John told Gaius that he was doing what was right
- So even if we don't know Christians beforehand, if they are faithful Christians, we are to give them shelter for the night, food, etc.

V 6 – **What had these missionaries said later?** They had told John about the hospitality of Gaius

- “Before the church”?** Maybe these missionaries had been sent out from church at Ephesus and made reports at end of mission trips
- V 6b?** Assist them in anyway possible
- Money to complete the trip, God-speed, etc.

V 7 – **Why did these missionaries go out to preach?** For the sake of the Name (*Acts 4.12* – name of Jesus)

- So these men went forth – not for personal gain
- “Gentiles”?** Probably reference to non-Christians
- They accepted no money from people they preached to
- Why?** They would have looked like mercenaries, just out for money
- Today, too many religious groups are in business and are very slick operators
- But these men were unselfish

V 8 – **John's conclusion?** We must support those who preach the gospel (especially missionaries)

- Summarize John's comments to Gaius?** Keep on helping those faithful brethren

3 John 9-12 – Rebuke of Diotrephes

V 9 – Apparently, John had already written a letter to the congregation where Gaius was a member

- What was the basic problem at that congregation?** A church dictator named Diotrephes
- What basic problem did Diotrephes have?** Pride in his heart, liked to be first
- He liked to call the shots and dictate church policy, and he liked for people to do it his way
- It was either his way or no way
- What had Diotrephes said about John's letter?** He did not “accept” it

V 10 – A great deal is said in *v 10*

- John hoped to get to that congregation shortly
- Maybe Gaius was intimidated by Diotrephes
- It is easy for younger members to be intimidated by an older person who likes being a dictator
- How will John rebuke Diotrephes?** He will call attention to his deeds
- What were the charges that John had against Diotrephes?**
 1. Unjustly accused John with wicked words
 - Imagine charging Apostle John with evil things!
 2. He does not receive the brethren (apparently the missionaries sent out by the church at

Ephesus)

3. Stops others from helping the missionaries

-A clear reference to Gaius – Diotrephes was opposing Gaius

4. Puts (or tried to put) out of the church anyone who opposed him (Gaius, for example)

-So here we have a church boss – Guy N. Woods: “a servant of Satan and an agent of the Devil”

-Clear indication: when John got there, Diotrephes would be “demoted” and disfellowshipped, if he did not repent

-Do we face same danger today of having a church dictator? Yes, the danger is always with us

-Even though no-one likes church trouble, we still must speak up if a church dictatorship seems to be developing, and that dictator has to be dealt with (if we truly love the Lord's church)

V 11 – John’s advice to Gaius and other members of that congregation? Don’t imitate Diotrephes’ actions

-Notice emphasis on one's deeds – sincerity is important – it is good to have right motives

-But one's actions are most important

V 12 – A third person is introduced in this letter

-Who was Demetrius? Possibilities –

1. Possibly one of missionaries who had come through that area

2. Maybe a member of that congregation who was trying to stop the dictatorship of Diotrephes

-John is on the side of Demetrius

-How did John compliment Demetrius? People have testified to his good character

-John: Support Demetrius and his efforts

3 John 13-14

V 13 – Why such a short letter about the terrible problems at that congregation? He hated to put it all down on paper

-What are the disadvantages of putting it down on paper in letter form? Possibility of misunderstanding – like emails today, they can be misinterpreted

V 14 – John’s goal? To see them face to face

Revised 2013-01-28