

4/13/2025

“THE STORY OF 3 JOHN”

3 John



What's going on with 3 John?

- Smallest book in the New Testament.
- Just under 200 words in Greek.
- It would fit on just one sheet of papyrus.
- There is a story, an explanation, of this letter that I think you would find very interesting. Especially if you heard it from John himself...

Next slide is a picture of John.

You can divide the 1st century into 3 parts:

1. Jesus' lifetime (4 BC to AD 30)
2. Period of great expansion of the gospel throughout the Roman Empire (AD 33 to 60)
3. A period of persecution and doctrinal issues (AD 60 to 100). The church faced huge issues: organized persecution by the Romans, and heresy infiltrating the church. On top of all this, there was a crisis of church leadership - especially as the apostles died, and the Lord had not returned. A period of persecution and doctrinal issues:

What now? What do we do now?

- Without a full, written, complete New Testament.
- Now books of the N.T. were already circulating to churches.
- It was during this time...that I wrote my gospel, John, in AD 85-90. A period of persecution and doctrinal issues:

What now? What do we do now?

- Without a full, written, complete New Testament.
- Now books of the N.T. were already circulating to churches.
- It was during this time...that I wrote my gospel, John, in AD 85-90. It circulates widely, and is subject to misinterpretation...
- So I write these letters 1,2,3, John in response to those false teachings and misinterpretation of my gospel in (AD 90-95).

My writings....:

- I write 1 John, speaking to a lot of issues of the times in a longer letter.
- Then I wrote 2 John, (Pastor preached last week) wrote to a dear friend of mine a widow, (elect lady) who had several grown children.
- Now I was a church planter, evangelist, a pastor, a leader of the churches; I was always in communication, helping, working through problems, questions issues as well as encouraging...

Writing 3 John, the story of 3 John:

3 men are in this story...

Let me introduce...

Gaius - the one I write to, to encourage him.

Diotrephes – the problem one in the church to confront him

Demetrius – the courier, the great example to commend him

Verse 8...a paraphrase:

5 Dear friend, you are being faithful to God when you care for the traveling teachers who pass through, even though they are strangers to you. 6 They have told the church here of your loving friendship. Please continue providing for such teachers in a manner that pleases God. 7 For they are traveling for the Lord, and they accept nothing from people who are not believers. 8 So we ourselves should support them so that we can be their partners as they teach the truth. NLT

Here's what was happening...

- I dealt with doctrinal, theological issues in 1 John.
- Then confronted the issues further in 2 John, as to what to do with those false teachers.
- But an influential man, Diotrephes, in the church, rejected that letter (v. 9). And rejected the traveling Bible teachers and preachers, missionaries, and sent them packing. He also stopped others from helping them by threatening them (v. 10).
- But the missionaries, traveling preachers found a courageous host: Gaius!
- So, I have this issue between these 2 men that I'm hearing about. What do I do?

What do I do?

- Write this letter commending Gaius;
- And calling out Diotrephes.
- He publicly called me out, accusing me of wicked words, lies, slander (v. 10b).
- I confront him publicly because he slandered me publicly.
- But my concern is Gaius, so I encourage him in the Lord (v. 11). To follow that which is good not Diotrephes!

And then there is Demetrius:

- Here is someone you can follow, my courier. The one bringing this short note.
- He has a good report, a good testimony (v. 12).
- Truth even commends him!
- And you know my testimony too (v. 12b)
- So I'm asking Gaius to take care of Demetrius.
- So what do I want you to learn??

What do I want you to learn from 3 John?

- Let me ask you a question...
- Who are you more like?
Gaius – Faithful servant and serving, commended for faithfulness.
Diotrephes – Do you love to be first? Are you self-centered? Have to have it your way?
Demetrius – Do you have a good testimony? Good report of truth?

Conclusion:

- Who are you more like?
- Diotrephes -
- Demetrius -
- Gaius –
- Who are you trying to be like?