

Reading Through the New Testament

2 & 3 John

Background to the Letter

- The letters of 2nd and 3rd John are both very brief. They were written to reinforce some of the themes of 1 John, as well as to address pressing concerns.
- It has been suggested that all three of the letters may have been sent together: 1 John as a sermon distributed to churches in the region, 2 John being a letter to one specific congregation, and 3 John addressed to one of the leaders in that church.
- The author identifies himself only as “the elder,” a common designation for church leaders (1 Pet. 5:1). Some commentators believe “John the elder” is a different person than “John the apostle,” but this is an unnecessary distinction.
- Like 1 John, these letters were most likely written from Ephesus where tradition tells us John spent the closing years of his life. The date was likely close to 90 A.D.
- Key themes include: love for one another, walking in the truth, showing hospitality, and guarding against false teachers.

Outline: 2 John

- I. Love the Truth (v.1-3)**
- II. Live the Truth (v.4-6)**
- III. Look for the Truth (v.7-11)**
- IV. Long for the Truth (v.12-13)**

Outline: 3 John

- I. Gaius,
A Commendable Christian (v.1-8)**
- II. Diotrefes,
A Conceited Christian (v.9-11)**
- III. Demetrius,
A Consistent Christian (v.12)**
- IV. John,
A Caring Christian (v.13-14)**

2 John

1. Truth is an important word in 2 John. Where does truth come from, and how can we discern whether or not something is true?

2. There is a very popular idea, in our culture, which denies the existence of absolute truths. According to that philosophy, truth is in the eye of the beholder, “what is true for you might not be true for me.” “Everyone has their own beliefs, and who are you to say they are wrong?” How do you think John would respond to people who hold to this understanding of truth? Does that philosophy really work?

3. It is not enough simply to know the truth intellectually, in our minds. Where does God’s truth need to be (v.2)? How should God’s truth affect the way we live (v.4)?

4. There were many deceivers, plaguing the early church, who distorted the message of Christ. According to verse 7 what was one doctrine, in particular, that they denied? Why is this doctrine so important to our faith?

5. The New Testament teaches that Jesus Christ is both:

- fully G_____ (John 1:1-3; 6:38; 8:58-59; 10:30-33; 17:5)
- and fully M_____ (John 1:14; 4:6; 10:35; 12:27; 19:28; 19:40-42)

6. What warning does the apostle give to believers, in verses 10-11 of 2 John? Why?

3 John

7. Gaius was a true believer, and friend of John. Whenever “the brothers,” traveling ministers or fellow Christians from out of town, came to the church, how did he receive them (v.5-6)?

8. Hospitality was an important virtue in the ancient world. It took longer to travel from one place to another, and it was not easy to find an EconoLodge along the way. Believers were encouraged to open their homes to fellow Christians (Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:9). Hospitality involved:

- Making strangers feel w_____
- Tending the physical n_____ of guests (i.e. offering food and a place to sleep)
- Helping with s_____ before sending them on their way

9. Do you think, in some ways, this might have seemed like an inconvenience? How could it also have been a blessing? What are ways that we might show hospitality in our modern age?

10. What example does Gaius offer us today in supporting missionaries through our prayers and financial gifts (v.8)?

11. Diotrephes was also a member of the church, and an influential leader, but sadly he did not demonstrate a very Christ-like attitude. How did he treat John and the brothers (v.9-10)? Why?

12. What happens when leaders (or members) of a church are controlled by jealousy and pride?