



Walking Thru The Bible

SECOND & THIRD JOHN

Introduction

Author: While John does not use his name in these two epistles it is generally accepted by the scholars that the writer is the same as the writer of the first epistle and the Gospel that bears his name. John refers to himself as "the elder" not in the sense in which that word is synonymous with bishop in a local church but in the primary sense of an older or aged person.

Second John

Recipient of 2nd John: There is a great diversity among the scholars as to whom the letter was really addressed, some think "the elect lady, and her children" meant a particular Christian woman and those who met in her house to worship God. Some believe that either "Electa" or "Lady" may have been her name. If so, this is then a more personal letter than the first epistle.

Others believe this reference is simply to a local church and its members. To speak of a church under the figure of a "Lady and her Children" is in no sense unlikely. If the "chosen lady" is a figurative way of designating a particular church, then the "chosen sister" of v.13 would mean a different church, or "sister" congregation.

Perhaps as one writer has put it, "the problem of the address is insoluble with our present knowledge."

Background of 2nd John: The false philosophy of Gnosticism and its teachers is still the major problem with which this epistles deals. This second epistle had more to do with the practical side of the right attitude to take toward Truth, false doctrine, false teachers and faithful brethren.

John writes to warn this dear sister (or congregation) against having her hospitality taken advantage of by the false teachers circulating in the region (vs. 9-11).

Purpose and Contents of 2nd John:

1) John expresses joy in finding her "children" walking in the truth as they had been commanded of God. This was a cause of joy when so many were being led astray by false teachers. They had been taught to love the

truth (2 Thess.2:10-12). That truth had to be discerned and they must continue to walk in it lest they lose those things already accomplished such as their forgiveness from sin and the hope of eternal life (vs.8-9) that their joy might be made full (v.12).

2) John also exhorts to walk in love (v.5). Truth not only taught them to love God and His truth but that walking also required walking in love (v.6). Their love had to include loving one another because they loved God and His truth.

3) John warns that many false teachers who loved only self had come into the world and had to be withstood and avoided lest they lose all they had wrought (vs. 7-8).

4) Doctrine must be limited to the truth of Christ and we dare not go beyond for that would separated us from both God and Christ (v.9). The "doctrine of Christ" here is not the "doctrine about Christ" revealed in the Gospel (objective genitive) but the doctrine emanating from Him and belonging to him (subjective genitive) or the doctrine which we taught. To go beyond that forfeits all connection with both God and Christ (Gal. 1:6-12; 2 Cor.4:13; 1 Cor.4:6).

5) Adherence to the truth revealed by Christ meant rejecting, refusing to fellowship by encouraging or supporting those teachers who teach any other doctrine. When we fellowship false teachers we become as guilty as they of disloyalty to the truth (vs. 10-11).

6) John closes the epistle with the hope that he might again see them face to face to further teach and encourage them and with a salutation from other Christians in a sister congregation to them (v.12).

Third John

The third letter, like the other two, deals with their love for the Lord, His Word, and their love for one another from a very practical point of view. All of John's epistles draw a sharp line of distinction between truth and error, light and darkness, and love and hatred.

Recipient of 3rd John: This is a very personal letter addressed to "Gaius, the beloved whom I love in the truth" (v.1). We do not know which Gaius this may be (cf. Acts 19:29; 20:4; Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 1:14). Some early writers mention a Gaius, not referred to in the scriptures, who had been ordained a "bishop" of Pergamos by John but we do not know that such is reliable.

Message: The letter focuses on showing hospitality and giving support to those traveling evangelists who were faithfully preaching the truth. Gaius had received them with hospitality while Diotrephes, a self-assertive leader in one of the churches, had refused to receive them. Whether Gaius and Diotrephes were members of the same congregation or sister congregations

is unknown

Traveling preachers, perhaps sent by John, had visited the church and a leader there named Diotrephes had spoken against the Apostle John and had stood against those who had received them.

The only reason given for his conduct was that he "loved to have the preeminence." John condemned this haughty and selfish ambition and the envy and jealousy it stirred up in his heart as reflected in his wicked treatment of both John and other brethren.

Rejection of Apostolic authority and instruction is a destructive attitude and alienates a man from God (I John 4:6).

Outline of the Book:

John expresses his love for Gaius (1) and assures him of his prayers (2), tells him his joy over his standing for the truth (3-4), commends him for his hospitality and fellowship toward faithful brethren (5-6), encourages him to continue to do so in spite of Diotrephes (7-9).

John informs Gaius of his intended visit to deal with Diotrephes (9-10), commends Demetrius to him (11-12), and gives assurance that he intends to visit him and talk with him face to face and tell him many things he could not write (13-14).

This third letter, as John's other epistles, was evidently written toward the end of John's ministry in the area of Asia Minor in the decade of the 60's or 70's. It gives us a view of life in a congregation of that period.

LESSONS:

1. These two epistles together serve to warn us against fellowshiping false teachers and supporting them in their error.

2. They also encourage us to extend hospitality and support to those who preach the truth.

3. There is a sever warning for leaders who let their position go to their head and seek the "preeminence" instead of supporting faithful preachers preaching the truth.

Helping God's Servant

3rd John

Introduction:

1. "What did I do?" is a question often asked by one who is credited with some good deed or charged with some crime, when the deed was performed by another.
 - a. Accessories to the fact, etc.
 - b. "Assists" are recorded in sports statistics as well.
2. Second and Third John deal with "assists" to religious teachers.
 - a. Second John warns against encouraging false teachers.
 - b. Third John commends Gaius for helping teachers of the truth.

I. WHOM SHOULD WE HELP?

- A. Teachers of Truth. Truth is tested by faithfulness and loyalty to the doctrine of Christ (1 John 4:1-3; 2 John 9).
- B. Faithful teachers and not hirelings (v. 7)
- C. Demetrius cited as an example (v.12). (1) Recommended by those who know him. (2) Recommended by comparison of his words and work with the Word of God. (3) Recommended by the apostle.

II. WHY SHOULD WE HELP?

- A. Because God's servants need help.
- B. So the servant of God can do the work that needs to be done; he can lead, teach, and encourage. (2 Tim. 4:5)
- C. Because Christians need to give the help (v.8); "fellow helpers to the truth." (1) "Where our missionaries go, we go with them" (2) A church is blessed in having young learning preachers working with them, not only for what he can do, but for what they can do for him. Together they grow!

III. HOW SHOULD WE HELP?

- A. In manner worthy of God. (1) Because he is God's servant and you love God, you help him with your best. (2) Because you are God's servant, and you act as God's channel of kindness and help.
- B. In encouragement for his service to another. (1) "Receive" and "bring them forward on their journey," we are not the only ones they need to serve. (2) Christians think of others, those weak and those who are lost.
- C. In thoughtful reflection of the Golden Rule. (1) Cooperate in what we ask him to do. (2) Express appreciation for conscientious effort. (3) Accept any benefit from the teaching and service he renders (cf. 1 Thess. 3:8). (4) Be thoughtful and considerate to his family. He can't accomplish his work if they are unhappy and neglected.

CONCLUSION:

1. You will meet him later, at some church, GM, camp, lectureship, or at the judgment. Let him greet you warmly, saying "You helped me to whatever accomplishment I have made in the ministry!"
2. Paul said to Philemon "The hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother." (Philemon 1:7).