

Cover to Cover: From Genesis to Maps
Sermon # 64 – “3 John”
October 18, 2009

3 John: Some Background Information

Authorship: The authorship of Third John historically has been attributed to the Apostle John. As in Second John, the writer simply identifies himself as “the elder.” He also writes in the same style as the author of First and Second John.

Audience: This letter was written to an individual believer named Gaius (v. 1), a “dear friend” of John (v. 1, 2, 5, 11). Gaius probably lived somewhere in Asia Minor (modern Turkey), as is also believed to be true regarding the recipients of First and Second John.

Date: This letter was written about A.D. 90-95, around the same time as John’s two other epistles.

Personalities: Third John is a personal letter than revolves around three individuals—(1) Gaius (the recipient); (2) Diotrephes (the troublemaker); and (3) Demetrius (probably the bearer of the letter).

Purpose: John wrote this letter (1) to praise Gaius for his faithfulness to the truth and his support for those in ministry (v. 1-8); (2) to condemn Diotrephes for his egocentric spirit and destructive tongue (v. 9-11); and (4) to commend Demetrius for his glowing Christian testimony (v. 12)

Focus: Unlike First and Second John, no specific doctrinal heresy is attacked in this letter. Instead, John confronts those who, rather than humbly walking in the truth, aspire to a position of power and control in the life of the church.

Length: Third John is the shortest book in both the New Testament and the entire Bible. It contains only 219 words in the original Greek text. NOTE: Second John has one less verse than Third John, but it contains more words (245).

Similarity to Second John: Second and Third John are described as “twin epistles” due to their parallels in structure and style. These “twins” are fraternal, not identical, as they contain notable differences in addition to striking similarities.

3 John: An Outline

1. Introduction: Salutation. v. 1–4

- The sender. v. 1a

- The recipient. v. 1b
- A prayer of blessing. v. 2
- A good report resulting in great joy. v. 3-4

2. Gaius is commended for... v. 5-8

- His gracious hospitality. v. 5, 8
- His faithful and loving heart. v. 5-6
- His kingdom-sized vision. v. 5

3. Diotrephes is condemned for... v. 9-11

- His self-centered pursuits. v. 9
- His opposition to godly men (including John) v. 9-10
- His dangerous, destructive tongue. v. 10
- His disruption of the plans of those with whom he disagrees. v. 10
- His strong-arming of fellow church members. v. 10

4. Demetrius is admired for... v. 12

- His exemplary Christian witness
 - Acknowledged by all who knew him.
 - Affirmed by the Word.
 - Attested to by John.

5. Conclusion. v. 13-14