

2 John & 3 John

These are the shortest letters in the New Testament – a single sheet of papyrus. John uses the same themes and images of 1st John in these personal letters.

1. Purpose

Before the finalization of the New Testament, it was common to have prophetic teachers visit local churches. These two letters present a balanced teaching on how to receive such teachers.

2 John – Be Careful about False Teachers

3 John – Be Hospitable to True Teachers

This is a good example of the balance of Scripture; we should interpret Scripture by other Scripture, to understand it properly.

2. Style

Both letters are carefully written to protect the believers. They were probably sent during a time of persecution. If they were found by opponents of ‘the Way’ no one would be found out.

2 John – No mention of personal names but does mention the names of Jesus.

3 John – Does mention personal names but never mentions the name of Jesus.

Both letters conclude in a very similar way – 2 John 12 // 3 John 13

3. Recipients

2 John ‘the chosen lady and her children’ – This is likely a reference to the church (chosen lady) and its members (her children). Her ‘chosen sister’ (v. 13) is probably another church in Asia Minor.

The letter is written against False Teachers coming into their church. This is not teaching that we should be inhospitable to unbelievers (Matthew 25.40, Galatians 6.10). Rather, they should not welcome False Teachers into the ‘house’ where the church meets, especially not to teach.

2 John 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him.

3 John – ‘my dear friend Gaius, whom I love in the truth’

Gaius was a very common name in the Roman Empire. This Gaius was probably led to faith by John and appointed as the leader of a local church.

3 John 3,5 ‘...your faithfulness to the truth and how you continue to walk in the truth...you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers’

Gaius is commended for welcoming True Teachers in the same way he would welcome God. (vs.6-8)

John writes confidentially to Gaius about two other men in his church:

Diotrephes – a self-centered gossip (vs. 9,10)

Demetrius – whose good testimony is recognized by God and man (v. 12)

4. Sending and Going

3 John contains some of the most encouraging instructions about Gospel-mission work in all of Scripture.

a. Sending "in a manner worthy of God" v. 6

"send on one's way" / phrase used 9 X's in New Testament, each time in a mission context

The Name of God is at stake in the way we treat His servants. Do all you can to see they have all they need. (see Matthew 25:40, Titus 3:13, Psalm 105:15-16)

b. Going "for the sake of the name" v. 7

We are commanded to support those who advance God’s glory. Mission work is not to be encouraged or enlisted in as a means to financial gain.

Whether in sending or going, the Name of the Lord is to be praised!