

2 John – all 13 verses!

3 John – all 15 verses!

The shortest 2 books of the NT!

Sharing Q: What is your history with houseguests (before COVID) – how hospitable are you?

From the Intro to 1 John (Spring 2021):

- Besides Hebrews, the 3 Letters of John are the only NT letters without an author ascribed to it. The other NT letters all mention the author, usually in the first word! e.g. Paul, Peter, James, Jude...
- 2 & 3 John both begin with “the elder” who most scholars think refers to John. (Cf from John’s gospel “the disciple whom Jesus loved” – he doesn’t say his name)
- The initial verses of 1 John mention that the author was an original eyewitness to Jesus. He speaks w authority – thus, the Apostle John.
- 1-3 John is written in the simplest Greek found in the NT. Thus, most seminary Greek classes begin by studying 1 John. There are over 5,000 different words in the NT, but 1, 2, & 3 John, only use 300 different words. John writes about the core of the gospel.
- 2 & 3 John are more obviously letters. From the elder to... the elect lady (2 John) or to Gaius (3 John)
- His audience - a community of churches around Ephesus that John pastored. “To the elect lady” refers to a local congregation

2 John - the subject matter: Hospitality to traveling missionaries

As we read in the book of Acts, in the 1st Century,

The gospel was rapidly spreading out from Jerusalem, thanks in part to some effects of the Roman Empire:

- The Roman Roads (traveling their known world was now much easier than before)
- The Roman Peace (Pax Romana)
- The Roman Language (a common language)

Where should the traveling Xns stay when they come into a new town?

- There aren’t nice hotels
- The inns are notoriously dangerous places
- In various spots in the NT, we read of traveling Xns staying in the homes of believers there.

And yet, this hospitality was open to easy abuse.

What about false teachers, posing as Xns? Do you extend hospitality to them?

It's against this background that we read 2 & 3 John.

In fact, another church document from the 1st C deals with this matter.

The *Didache* was a manual of church order, circulated to rural churches in Syria.

- It was assumed that traveling Xns would visit the local churches.
- Each traveler was to be examined, so that the genuine could be discerned from the false.
- Tests were on his doctrine, motives, & his attitude to money, board & lodging, and moral conduct.

Read vv.1-3 – the Intro

From the elder – his title, not his name. John assumed his readers would know who he was.

To the elect lady and her children

Some have thought this is a person (named “Electa”) yet this would mean in v. 13 that she also has a sister named Electa, as well. Or maybe just an anonymous “chosen lady.”

More probably,

This is a personification – a local church, w her children being the church members.

In vv. 1-3 - 4X John mentions “truth,” 11X in 2 John

Read vv.4-11 - The Message - Truth and Love

4-6 characteristics of true believers

Walk in the truth, love one another, walk according to his commandments (obedience)

7-11 false teachers (they deny the Incarnation): 1) don't be deceived, 2) don't encourage them
You should “abide in the teaching of X.”

These false teachers don't – they go beyond it (v.9), they “run ahead too far.”

Thus, “a superior knowledge.” They've “gone beyond,” they've “advanced.”

They've separated the Father from the Son.

So, don't receive them. Don't welcome their teaching (esp in your church).

In the gospels, Jesus warned of false prophets coming after him

In 1 John 4, John warns of many false prophets. Here: many deceivers.

They were itinerant false prophets, benefitting from the Roman system of transport.

“Deny the Incarnation” – and it begins to happen so soon.

Think of those who deny the Holocaust – some 50 years later.

Xn faith is rooted in the historical events of the Incarnation (Xmas) & the atonement (Easter).

Thus, some denied his humanity; others denied his divinity. We cannot do either!

To “advance beyond X is not progress, but apostacy.” Plummer Not enlightenment but darkness.

Read vv.12-13 Final Greetings - strikingly similar to the end of 3 John

- 12 John wants to visit in person!
 13 “The children of your elect sister” – another church, where John is writing from.

3 John

written on another single piece of papyrus
 a more positive letter, highlighting the benefits of Xn hospitality
 more personal, mentioning 3 folks by name

From the Didache (1st C Manual on hospitality) – acknowledges that Xn hospitality was often abused

- An apostle must not stay beyond 1 day (in case of necessity, 2 days).
 But if he stays 3 days: he is a false prophet.
- When leaving, he can receive enough food to last his journey.
 But if he asks for money, he is a false prophet.
- An ordinary Xn traveler must not be entertained for free for more than 2-3 days.
 If he wants to stay longer, he must work for his living.

Read vv. 1-8 The message to Gaius

There are 3 Gaius' mentioned by Paul in the NT.

Some say Gaius was the most common name in the Roman Empire. We don't know who he was.
 How John describes him:

dear friend (“beloved” – 3X)

whom I love in truth (sincerely) or in the truth (= truth of the gospel)

my children walking in the truth (was Gaius John's “child” – convert?)

Others have testified to Gaius': faithfulness to the truth, how he walks in the truth.

His transparent faith: letting his light shine and not hiding it. Even strangers (v.5) notice it.

v.6 – and testify of his love. We should support these true missionaries.

Read vv. 9-12 Diotrephes and Demetrius The got their names in the Bible

What Diotrephes is known for: (in contrast to Gaius)

Puts himself first

Doesn't welcome John's authority, spreads false charges against him

Refuses to welcome traveling missionaries

Kicks people out of church

What to imitate? The good and not the evil.

v. 11 Beloved (Gaius, again? 4X)

= it's self-evident

v. 12 Demetrius – everyone speaks well of him, the truth speaks well of him, & so do John et al.

Read vv. 13-14 The ending – very similar to 2 John