

2 & 3 JOHN

The “_____ [a]” epistles of 2 and 3 John are tiny and much neglected epistles filled with _____ [b] and _____ [c]. They are the _____ [d] books in the New Testament. Each contains less than 250 words in the Greek text and could have fit on a single sheet of papyrus paper. 2 John is 245 words in Greek, making it the second shortest book in the Bible, and 3 John is 219 Greek words, making it the shortest. They are also two of the _____ [e] books written in the New Testament. John probably wrote 2 John from Ephesus shortly after he wrote 1 John, which was probably between AD 90-95. Eusebius, the ancient church historian, says 3 John was written after John was released from the rock quarry island of _____ [f] in the Aegean Sea (from where John wrote Revelation). If this is correct, 3 John would be the last New Testament book written.

THE AUTHOR

Although neither of these little letters identify the author by name—the author of both epistles simply calls himself “the _____ [g]”—no one doubts that John the apostle is the author of both books. By the way, this introduction—“the elder”—is _____ [h] to 2 and 3 John. There are several reasons why no one really disputes that John the apostle is the author of these letters. The _____ [i] reason is the similarity of _____ [j] and _____ [k] that these letters have with both 1 John and the Gospel of John. They are all so _____ [l] in language, vocabulary, and style that it would be very difficult to argue that the same person didn’t produce all these books.

“THE ELDER”

What exactly is John saying about himself by referring to himself as “the elder”? It’s hard to say with absolute certainty. Some think the word “elder” carries the idea of him working in a local congregation in the _____ [m] of an overseer/elder (see 1 Peter 5:1 where Peter says, “I exhort the _____ [n] among you, as your fellow _____ [o] . . .”). Most scholars, however, don’t believe John is using “elder” as a church _____ [p]. The word “elder” literally means “_____ [q] man,” and that’s probably what John has in mind when he uses this word. He’s just acknowledging that he’s now an aged man who has earned _____ [r] and _____ [s] by virtue of his age, experience, character, and reputation.

THE CONTENT OF 2 JOHN

The book of 2 John is written to “the chosen lady and her children” (2 John 1). Many scholars believe the phrase “chosen lady” is not referring to a _____[t] at all. Instead, they say it’s a _____[u] for a local _____[v]. Here are a few reasons why many hold this view: (1) the personal pronoun “you” in verses 6 and 8 is _____[w] which may indicate that he’s not writing to a single person; (2) personifying a local church or the universal church is actually pretty common in the New Testament (2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:25-27; Rev 21:9; 22:17); (3) a local church would be more apt to need _____[x] about false teachers; and (4) the command to _____[y] one another would fit a congregation better than an individual.

The more _____[z] understanding in this context, however, is to take “chosen lady and her children” as an actual _____[aa] and her _____[bb], whom John knew personally. The use of the plural pronoun “you” can easily be explained if John is including the children of “the chosen lady” in the pronoun. Also, the letter’s obvious similarity to 3 John, which clearly was written to an individual, favors the view that 2 John was also written to an individual. Further, it would be unnatural for John to use a figure of speech and maintain it for the entire letter. And finally, the _____[cc] of the letter is so simple and tender, and that’s not in keeping with an elaborate metaphor.

In this letter John is still dealing with the same problem he addressed in 1 John—the problem of _____[dd] teachers. In fact, you can see it’s the same problem in verse 7 when he writes: “For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the _____[ee]. This is the _____[ff] and the _____[gg].” Compare that to 1 John 4:2-3: “. . . every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not . . . is the spirit of the _____[hh].”

In this second letter John is concerned with the _____[ii] ministry that these false teachers are conducting as they seek to make converts in different churches. _____[jj] preachers and missionaries were common in John’s day thanks in large part to the _____[kk] of the Roman Empire. The Roman _____[ll] system—as well as the deployment of Roman _____[mm] throughout the Empire—stimulated the growth of world commerce and made travel far easier, less expensive, and much _____[nn] than at any other time in world history. This was great for carrying out Jesus’ “Great Commission” to make disciples all over the world; but these same factors that facilitated the spread of _____[oo] gospel preaching also facilitated the spread of _____[pp] teaching.

As teachers traversed the Empire teaching about salvation in Christ, supporting them with _____[qq] was to be an important ministry among Christians. Several letters in the New Testament urge God's people to practice _____[rr] (Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2; Tit 3:13-14; 1 Pet 4:9). I'm reminded of what Paul said to Philemon: "At the same time also prepare me a lodging, for I hope that through your prayers I will be given to you" (Phlm 22). And when I think about showing hospitality to God's servants and messengers, I always think of the Shunamite couple who constructed a guest _____[ss] for the great prophet _____[tt] for those times when his travels would bring him into their area; and, of course, the Lord blessed her hospitality by giving her a son (2 Kgs 4:8-17).

It's this _____[uu] of hospitality and false teachers that prompts John to write this letter. While showing hospitality to God's servants is important, it's important to _____[vv] between God's true, faithful servants who are preaching _____[ww] and the deadly false teachers who are spreading venomous _____[xx]. So, John felt the need to _____[yy] this sweet Christian lady about giving any and all teachers aid and assistance. He cautions her—as a model for all believers—against participating in the evil deeds of false teachers by showing them hospitality.

THE CONTENT OF 3 JOHN

Third John is the most _____[zz] of John's three epistles. Like 2 John, it addresses the issue of a believer's duty to show love and hospitality within the bounds of faithfulness to the _____[aaa]. But here's the difference between these two letters on this issue. Second John reveals the _____[bbb] side—false teachers are NOT to be granted hospitality in the name of showing love. Third John, on the other hand, reveals the _____[ccc] side—all who embrace the _____[ddd] are to be loved and cared for. This letter includes three different messages about three men.

Gaius

First, John commends Gaius, to whom this letter was written, for his ministry of _____[eee] to faithful church _____[fff] who _____[ggg] from town to town helping to establish and strengthen churches. John responds with joy to a report that his "beloved Gaius" is walking in the _____[hhh] (3 John 4). John acknowledges his actions toward traveling teachers and missionaries (3 John 5-6). These travelers accepted no funds from _____[iii] (3 John 7) and depended entirely upon the hospitality of faithful Christians like Gaius (3

John 8). John encourages him to _____[jjj] to participate in their ministries (3 John 8).

Diotrephes

John then cautions his readers not to _____[kkk] Diotrephes. He is the _____[lll] example of what not to be. His pride wouldn't allow him to accept itinerant and traveling teachers sent out by the apostle (3 John 9). If anyone in the church tried to do their Christian duty to assist and show them hospitality, Diotrephes had him _____[mmm] from the _____[nnn] (3 John 10). John anticipates the need to exercise his _____[ooo] and confront Diotrephes for his un-Christian-like conduct (3 John 10).

Demetrius

John cautions his readers to not imitate what is evil (such as the conduct of Diotrephes in verses 9-10). Diotrephes' evil actions show a blindness to the very thing John has preached passionately about in his first two letters—we are to love one another. On the other hand, Demetrius' life is a _____[ppp] example to all believers of what is good. He is highly spoken of by all, including John himself, and even his very life is a living reality of the _____[qqq].

LESSONS FROM 2 & 3 JOHN

- _____[rrr] and _____[sss] are the twin rails on which Christianity runs. Love is to be expressed in the context of truth (2 John 3).
- Truth can be _____[ttt] as an objective reality (2 John 1).
- _____[uuu] is the source of truth (2 John 9).
- Realize Christian teachers, preachers, and missionaries need your _____[vvv] (3 John 5-8).

- _____[www] with Christian workers in their ministries by _____[xxx] them (3 John 8).
- _____[yyy] Christian workers so they don't grow weary in their service (3 John 5-6).
- Be careful not to _____[zzz] a leadership position (3 John 9-10).
- Be careful! False teachers are very _____[aaaa]. Make sure their _____[bbbb] matches with Scripture (2 John 10).
- _____[cccc] over _____[dddd] issues is not a reason for avoiding support and hospitality (2 John 7-9).
- Guard your _____[eeee]! People will watch you and talk about you (3 John 12).
- _____[ffff] good, godly people (3 John 11-12).

KEY PASSAGES FROM 2 & 3 JOHN

- 2 John 4
- 2 John 6
- 2 John 8
- 2 John 9-10
- 3 John 2
- 3 John 3-4
- 3 John 11

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK ANSWER KEY

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| [a] postcard | [ss] room |
| [b] wisdom | [tt] Elisha |
| [c] insight | [uu] combination |
| [d] shortest | [vv] discern |
| [e] last | [ww] truth |
| [f] Patmos | [xx] lies |
| [g] elder | [yy] caution |
| [h] unique | [zz] personal |
| [i] biggest | [aaa] truth |
| [j] language | [bbb] negative |
| [k] vocabulary | [ccc] positive |
| [l] similar | [ddd] truth |
| [m] office | [eee] hospitality |
| [n] elders | [fff] workers |
| [o] elder | [ggg] travel |
| [p] title | [hhh] truth |
| [q] older | [iii] unbelievers |
| [r] authority | [jjj] continue |
| [s] respect | [kkk] emulate |
| [t] person | [lll] negative |
| [u] metaphor | [mmm] removed |
| [v] church | [nnn] church |
| [w] plural | [ooo] authority |
| [x] warnings | [ppp] positive |
| [y] love | [qqq] truth |
| [z] natural | [rrr] Truth |
| [aa] person | [sss] love |
| [bb] children | [ttt] known |
| [cc] tone | [uuu] Christ |
| [dd] false | [vvv] support |
| [ee] flesh | [www] Partner |
| [ff] deceiver | [xxx] supporting |
| [gg] antichrist | [yyy] Encourage |
| [hh] antichrist | [zzz] misuse |
| [ii] itinerant | [aaaa] deceptive |
| [jj] Traveling | [bbbb] message |
| [kk] infrastructure | [cccc] Disagreement |
| [ll] highway | [dddd] minor |
| [mm] troops | [eeee] reputation |
| [nn] safer | [ffff] imitate |
| [oo] faithful | |
| [pp] false | |
| [qq] hospitality | |
| [rr] hospitality | |