

Episode: Other Letters Series No. 08

Narrator: Gaius

Primary Scriptures: *2 John* and *3 John*

Story Summary: Overview of *2 John* and *3 John*

Location: Roman Empire

Time: 85-95 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: *2 John* 1:5-6. *3 John* 1:8, 1:11

It is traditionally thought that *2 John* and *3 John* were written by John the apostle. He is thought to have also authored the *Gospel of John*, *1 John* and *Revelation*. It is likely the audience for these two letters is the same as for *1 John*. John was probably much older than eighty when he wrote these letters.

Both *2 John* and *3 John* demonstrate John's love for his audiences and his warnings against false teachers. These letters are probably written about a half-century after the death of Jesus. They demonstrate that the Church has made a lot of progress but still faces a multitude of problems.

The church has many members who have stayed true to the teachings of Jesus and the apostles. These faithful members treat each other with hospitality and love. *2 John* 1:5 seems to be a clear reference to the command of Jesus to love God and to love your neighbor.

John shows the importance of protecting the fellowship of Christians from false teachers, warning against inviting them into homes or even greeting them. Such things align believers with false teachers, which quickly taints true teaching.

Unfortunately, the Church was already infiltrated by false teachers. Rooting them out would not be easy. The false teachers told falsehoods about the person of Jesus. One such falsehood was that Jesus only *seemed* to have come in the flesh but that this was only an illusion. One word for this type of false teaching is Docetism, and this type of belief may have been an early form of Gnosticism.

Apparently, John had heard of difficulties caused by a man named Diotrephes. John wrote to Gaius to confirm Gaius' faith, and to instruct him about dealing with Diotrephes. Diotrephes was refusing to show hospitality to traveling missionaries and had refused correction from John. His actions threatened to disrupt the harmony of the Asian churches and could threaten the very way the Gospel was shared.

John's solution is for Christians to remain faithful to the teachings of Jesus and the apostles, and to show love to one another.

John shows us that it is important to be obedient to true teachings. Our disobedience affects many others than just ourselves.

Discussion Questions:

1. In modern society, it is often supposed there is no single truth. Based on 2 John 1:2-3, do you suppose John thought that truth is ephemeral or relative? What was truth for John?
 2. 2 John 1:5 says it is a commandment to love one another, and that this was a commandment from the beginning. What do you think John meant by the beginning? What does it mean to love?
 3. What were some of the false teachers teaching?
 4. What did John command his listeners to do with false teachers?
 5. Did John mean for 2 *John* to be a complete statement of his thoughts?
 6. What does 2 John 1:13 mean?
 7. What is the difference in the audiences for 2 *John* and 3 *John*?
1. Jesus is the truth and is the basis for all truth. 2. Possibly from the laws of Moses, in Leviticus 19:18, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself." One aspect of loving is to follow the commands of God, including walking in love. 3. That Jesus did not come in the flesh. Apparently, they were saying that Jesus was spirit and absolutely pure, so he could not exist in a fleshly body. 4. Not welcome them or have anything to do with them, so as not to share in their wicked work. 5. It appears as if this letter is an introduction to the things he wanted to share in person with them. 6. That John is including the members of his church in his final words. 7. 2 *John* seems to have been written to a church or a group of Christians, while 3 *John* was written to an individual. We are not given any details about Gaius, but he may have been an influential church leader.

Application Questions:

1. Have you ever listened to a false teacher? How did you know it was a false teacher? What did you do?
2. Are you willing to love somebody just because it is commanded for you to do so? How easy or difficult is it for you to love others? Why?
3. Does it give you joy to have your children or close friends walk in the ways of Jesus, like Gaius did? What if they don't walk in the ways of Jesus?
4. How can you work with other Christians to spread the truth of Jesus? What kinds of hospitality can you show to people?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. 3 John 1:11 says to imitate good, not evil. What does that mean to you? What things do you recognize as evil?
2. Is truth relative or are there truths that exist throughout all time and places?
3. Do you think people are more influenced by your good actions or by your words? What can you do to increase your influence? Whom does God intend for you to influence? Why do you believe that?