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Article 64: Third John at a Glance

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THIRD JOHN AT A GLANCE

This book was written to highly commend two godly church members (Gaius and Demetrius) for their role model lives and to soundly condemn another member (Diotrephes) for his gross and godless actions within the church.

BOTTOM LINE SUMMARY

AN EPISTLE FROM AN ELDER CONCERNING AN EXHORTER, AN EGOTIST, AND AN EXAMPLE

The epistle is 3 John. The elder is John. The exhorter is Gaius; the egotist, Diotrephes; and the example, Demetrius.

FACTS REGARDING THE AUTHOR OF THIS BOOK

1. Who? **John**. Known as the “beloved disciple” (Jn. 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20, 24), and brother of James (Lk. 5:10). John was a follower of John the Baptist (Jn. 1:35-37), before being called to become one of Jesus’ twelve apostles (Lk. 5:10, 11; Mt. 10:2).
2. What? The books of John, 1, 2, and 3 John, Revelation.
3. When and where?
 - a. John: 90 A.D., from Ephesus.
 - b. 1, 2, 3 John: 92 A.D., from Ephesus.
 - c. Revelation: 95 A.D., from Isle of Patmos.
4. Why?
 - a. John: To present Christ as the eternal Son of God.
 - b. 1 John: A family letter from the Father to His children concerning the subject of fellowship.
 - c. 2 John: To an elect lady concerning the subject of truth.
 - d. **3 John**: Concerning right attitudes in the local church.
 - e. Revelation: The final action on the stage of divine prophecy.
5. To whom?
 - a. John—to the world.
 - b. 1 John—to the Father’s children.
 - c. 2 John—to the elect lady.
 - d. **3 John**—to Gaius.
 - e. Revelation—to the seven churches in Asia Minor.

KEY EVENTS

1. Addressing three church members, an exhorter, an egotist, and an example.

KEY INDIVIDUALS

1. **John**, former fisherman, brother of James, and author of five New Testament books (including 3 John)
2. **Gaius**, church member who was commended by John for his purity of life and his faithfulness in ministering to traveling teachers and missionaries
3. **Diotrephes**, church member who was condemned by John for his arrogant self-seeking ways, his wicked slander, and cruel treatment of other believers
4. **Demetrius**, church member who was commended by John for his positive and well-known testimony in the entire region, both inside and outside the church

KEY PLACES

1. None referred to

UNIQUE FEATURES

1. J. Vernon McGee says: "This is a letter similar to John's second epistle, in that it is personal in character, and it carries the same theme of truth. However, this letter deals with principalities. In his second epistle, John says that truth is worth standing for, and in the third epistle that truth is worth working for." (*Third John*, p. 291).
2. In his second epistle John dealt with the problem of welcoming deceivers (which should not have been done); in this epistle he discusses the error of not receiving believers (which should have been done).
3. This is the shortest book in the Bible.
4. Both 2 and 3 John end in similar fashion.
 - In 2 John—"*Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full*" (2 Jn. 12).
 - In 3 John—"*I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee: But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name*" (3 Jn. 13-14).
5. This epistle gives an excellent (though brief) glimpse of church life at the close of the first century.
6. This epistle calls by name the fourth of four men who were causing trouble in a local church. These are:
 - Hymenaeus (1 Tim. 1:20)
 - Alexander (1 Tim. 1:20)
 - Philetus (2 Tim. 2:17)
 - Diotrephes (3 Jn. 9)

COMPARISON WITH OTHER BIBLE BOOKS

1. Second John:

- The author of both calls himself an elder.
- In both letters he rejoices upon hearing his recipients are walking in truth.

2. Both epistles are the two shortest in the New Testament.

TITLES FOR AND TYPES OF JESUS

1. God (v. 11)