

EPISTLE OF III JOHN

TEXT: III JOHN 1-14

INTRODUCTION:

1. The epistle of III John is very similar to II John. It was written around the same time as I & II John (90 AD).
2. Like II John, the key word is "truth" (vss. 1, 3, 4, 8, 12).
3. In II John, the elect lady is warned not to extend hospitality to false teachers (II John 10, 11). In III John, Gaius is commended for the hospitality he has extended to preachers of the true Gospel (III John 5-8).
4. As in I & II John, we see in III John that the devil is busy at work. John refers to a self-willed domineering man named Diotrephes (vss. 9, 10).
5. In addition to the troublemaking Diotrephes, John refers to two godly men -- "the wellbeloved Gaius," the recipient of the epistle (vs. 1), and Demetrius, a man with a "good report" (vs. 12).

I. THE WELL-BELOVED GAIUS (1-8)

1. As in his second epistle, John simply identifies himself as "an elder" (III John 1; cf. II John 1). Peter does the same in I Peter 5:1. In the New Testament, the words elder, bishop, and pastor are used interchangeably.
2. The epistle is addressed to "the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth" (vs. 1).
3. Gaius was a popular name in Bible times, and there are four other men by the name of Gaius in the New Testament.
4. Acts 19:29 refers to "Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel."
5. Acts 20:4 refers to "Gaius of Derbe," another traveling companion of Paul.
6. Romans 16:23 says, "Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you."
7. Paul says in I Corinthians 1:14, "I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius."
8. There is no way of telling whether or not one of these men was the same man referred to in III John. He is probably a different Gaius, and a convert of John (cf. III John 4).

9. In verse 2, John said he wished that Gaius' physical condition would be as good as his spiritual condition. This verse has been abused and twisted by the so-called "prosperity preachers."
10. Gaius had a good Christian testimony (vs. 3).
11. Verse 4 refers to both our converts as well as our children.
12. John greatly commended Gaius for his hospitality (vss. 5-8), both "to the brethren, and to strangers" (vs. 5).
13. The Bible emphasizes the importance of hospitality. First Timothy 3:2 says one of the qualifications for a pastor is that he be "given to hospitality."
14. Widows should be hospitable. First Timothy 5:10 says, "Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work."
15. These are not just requirements for pastors or widows. Romans 12:13 says all Christians should be "given to hospitality."
16. Hebrews 13:1, 2 says, "Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."
17. First Peter 4:9 says, "Use hospitality one to another without grudging."
18. When rewards are given out at the judgment seat of Christ, those that have been hospitable will receive a great reward.
19. Our Lord said, "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matthew 10:41, 42).
20. Not every one can preach but every Christian can receive a preacher's reward by showing hospitality to preachers.
21. "Bring forward on their journey" (III John 6) means to help move them forward on their journey.
22. "After a godly sort" (vs. 6) means to take care them, to make sure they have adequate supplies, enough money, a safe vehicle for travel, etc.
23. "Because that for his (God's) name's sake they went forth..." (vs. 7). They had undertaken their journey for the cause of Christ, and they had resolved not to be dependent on the heathen for their support.

24. The preachers had to look to God alone for the supply of their needs (vss. 7, 8). They would not accept money from unsaved people. There were several reasons for this.
25. It is a bad testimony when preachers have to beg the unsaved for money. I remember back in January, 1987, when Oral Roberts said God told him he had to raise \$8 million by March 1 or God would kill him. He got on television and begged for money, and he was given \$1.3 million by a worldly man who owned two dog race-tracks in Florida.
26. Jerry Collins, the 79-year-old owner of the two dog racing tracks, said that he hoped the donation would provide "psychological help" for the Pentecostal TV preacher.
27. Richard Roberts, Oral Roberts' son, said it did not trouble him that the donation came from a man who made his fortune in the gambling business. By the way, the money was supposed to go towards Oral Roberts' medical school, but it went bankrupt in less than two years.
28. When Christians beg from worldly people, it brings reproach upon the Gospel. The message they are putting out is --God cannot provide, so we need to ask lost sinners to help us.
29. When lost people donate money to Christians, it gives them a false sense of security and a false ground for self-righteousness. Like the 79-year-old racetrack owner who probably thought he could get to heaven by giving Oral Roberts \$1.3 million.
30. Are you a "fellow helper to the truth"? (vs. 8). You are either a helper or a hinderer?

II. THE DOMINEERING DIOTREPHESES (9-11)

1. Apparently John had written to the local church but a trouble-maker named Diotrephes had intercepted the letter (vs. 9).
2. Like many carnal church members today, Diotrephes had an exaggerated view of his own importance. Diotrephes "loveth to have the preeminence among them" (vs. 9).
3. But according to the Bible, only the Lord Jesus Christ should have the preeminence among us. Colossians 1:18 says, "that in all things He might have the preeminence.
4. John said he would deal with Diotrephes, and we can be sure God dealt with him (vs. 10).
5. Third John 10 reminds us that sometimes we must confront trouble-makers. It can be difficult but it is necessary in order to keep the church from falling apart.

6. A.T. Robertson was a well-known Baptist scholar, and professor of New Testament Greek. His books are still widely read today, especially his *Word Pictures in the New Testament* and his *Grammar of the Greek New Testament*.
7. Many years ago (A.T. Robertson died in 1934), wrote an article on Diotrephes for a Baptist newspaper. After it was published, the editor told Dr. Robertson that 25 Baptist deacons wrote to cancel their subscription, complaining that they were being personally attacked (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*).
8. In verse 11, John says once again that "He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God. " (cf. I John 2:29; 3:7, 8).
9. Verse 11 indicates Diotrephes was not saved, since he did evil.

III. THE GOOD DEMETRIUS (12-14)

1. Some believe that Demetrius was the bearer of this letter to Gaius.
2. Perhaps Demetrius was among the group of believers whom Diotrephes would not receive (vss. 9, 10).
3. Diotrephes had the testimony "of the truth itself" (vs. 12). He bore the testimony of truth that he was a righteous, godly man.
4. John was a great writer. He wrote five books of the Bible, including the greatest book about salvation, the Gospel of John, and the greatest book on prophecy, the book of Revelation.
5. Yet, though John was a great writer he told Demetrius he would rather "speak face to face" with him (vss. 13, 14; cf. II John 12).

CONCLUSION:

1. A geyser is a hot spring that intermittently sends up fountain-like jets of water and steam into the air.
2. "Old Faithful" is a geyser located in Yellowstone National Park in the state of Wyoming. Old Faithful was named in 1870 and was the first geyser in the park to receive a name.
3. It gets its name from the fact that unlike other geysers, Old Faithful follows a dependable time schedule.
4. It shoots a stream of boiling water over 170 feet into the air lasting from a minute and a half to five minutes.
5. Intervals between eruptions were averaging 66.5 minutes in 1939, and have slowly increased to an average of 90 minutes apart today.
6. Today God is looking for men that are faithful (not necessarily old).

7. We need faithful men like Gaius and Demetrius.
8. Albert Barnes said, "Let us follow the example of Gaius -- the hospitable Christian; the large-hearted philanthropist; the friend of the stranger; the helper of those who were engaged in the cause of the Lord -- a man who opened his heart and his house to welcome them when driven out and disowned by others. Let us imitate Demetrius, in obtaining a good report of those who know us; in so living that, if the aged apostle John were still on earth, we might be worthy of his commendation, and more than all, of the approbation of that gracious Saviour before whom these good men have long since gone, and in whose presence we also must soon appear."