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Message #1

Various Texts

Most believe this was the last letter John wrote before he died. Many scholars believe after John wrote Revelation from the island of Patmos, he got off the island and wrote I John, II John and III John prior to his death.

QUESTION #1 – Why study III John?

Reason #1 - Because III John is one of only 66 rare books of the Bible.

It appeared as belonging in God's Word in the Muratorian Canon (A.D. 170); the Apostolic Canon (A.D. 300); the Athanasius Canon (A.D. 367). III John was listed as a book of the Bible in the Old Latin Translation (A.D. 200). It was also deemed to be a book of the Bible at the Council Meetings of Hippo (A.D. 393); Carthage (A.D. 397) and again at Carthage (A.D. 419).

Reason #2 - Because III John shows the importance of truth and truthfulness.

In most places, if it comes down to a choice between doing what someone deems as “loving” versus standing for “truth,” most will opt to do what they consider loving. Not III John! In the mind of the Apostle John and in the mind of God, any demonstration of love will **always** be in the context of truth.

Reason #3 - Because III John is perhaps the last letter written by John.

Even in his last years of life we find him fighting and standing for truth.

Reason #4 - Because III John demonstrates there is a time for publically pointing out those who are wrong.

He writes this last letter and aims it straight at a person who is clearly out of step with God.

Reason #5 - Because it brings me closer to preaching through every book of the Bible.

QUESTION #2 – Who wrote III John?

There is no doubt that III John was written by the Apostle John. First of all, the book has the name John. Second, the person was so well-known that he could simply identify himself as “the elder.” Third, the style of writing is clearly that of the Apostle John. Fourth, the early church identified this letter as having been written by John the apostle. Fifth, the writer clearly had tremendous authority with the church (v. 10).

QUESTION #3 – What is the background that prompted John to write III John?

Reason #1 - To commend Gaius for his faithfulness and commitment to truth. 1:1-4

Reason #2 - To commend believers in the Church who demonstrated hospitality to apostolic representatives. 1:5-8

During the first years of Christianity when churches were being established, the apostolic instruction and teaching of Jesus Christ was carried from church to church by traveling preachers and teachers who had been appointed by the apostles.

Reason #3 - To warn Diotrephes that judgment was coming. 1:9-10

He rejected apostolic instruction and apostolic representation. In fact, when the apostles would send someone to the church, he would put them out (1:10).

Reason #4 - To pave the way for Demetrius, the apostolic representative. 1:12

Apparently John wrote to Gaius because John wanted this church to receive an apostolic representative whose name was Demetrius (1:12).

Reason #5 - To inform the readers that he himself intended to visit this church. 1:10, 14

QUESTION #4 – To whom was III John written?

The immediate person to whom the letter was written was a man named Gaius (1:1). However, we know that more than just Gaius is in view because John says it is for the whole church (1:6, 10). There are three persons named Gaius in the N.T.: 1) Gaius of Macedonia, who accompanied Paul on some of his journeys and was seized in Ephesus (Acts 19:29); 2) Gaius of Derbe, who accompanied Paul on his return from Macedonia into Asia (Acts 20:4); and 3) Gaius of Corinth, the host of Paul, who was baptized by Paul, in whose house the church met (Rom. 16:23; I Cor. 1:14). There is an Ephesus connection between the Gaius of Macedonia and a man named Demetrius in Acts 19:29, 38.

QUESTION #5 – What is the theme of III John?

The theme of III John is this—Biblical love must always be in the context of truth. Walking in love means walking in truth and sometimes that means standing against one who is arrogant in your own church.

If you are going to have a life that is devoted to God, you will have to stand for what is true. That means you will have to stand up for some people and stand against some people. These will be people with real names who perhaps are in the same church. A life that counts for God will have to stand for truth.