

John's Letter to a Sister Church and Its Members (c. 90–95)

2 John

Greeting

- 1 The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth,
2 for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever:
3 Grace, mercy *and* peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

A Call to Love One Another and to Walk in Obedience

- 4 I was very glad to find *some* of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment *to do* from the Father.
5 Now I ask you, lady, not as though *I were* writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another.
6 And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.

Warning Against False Teachers—The Mark of an Antichrist

- 7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ *as* coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.
8 Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.

Prohibition Against Aiding Heretics

- 9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.
10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into *your* house, and do not give him a greeting;
11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.

Farewell

- 12 Though I have many things to write to you, I do not want to *do so* with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, so that your joy may be made full.
13 The children of your chosen sister greet you.

John's Letter to Gaius (c. 90–95)

3 John

Greeting

- 1 The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.
2 Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.
3 For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, *that is*, how you are walking in truth.
4 I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.

Our Obligation to Support Those Who Spread the Gospel

- 5 Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially *when they are* strangers;
6 and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God.

7 For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles.

8 Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth.

Reject the Example of Diotrophes and Imitate the Example of Demetrius

9 I wrote something to the church; but Diotrophes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say.

10 For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire *to do so* and puts *them* out of the church.

11 Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God.

12 Demetrius has received a *good* testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself; and we add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true.

Farewell

13 I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write *them* to you with pen and ink;

14 but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face.

15 Peace *be* to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

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Chronological Notes

- 1) “Reliable historical tradition strongly suggests that John spent his latter years in Asia Minor in and around Ephesus (see Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.1.2; Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* 3.1.1). The apostle’s move from Palestine to Asia Minor reportedly took place sometime subsequent to the Jewish rebellion in the year 66. We concluded that John’s Gospel was most likely written in the early to mid-80s (see chap. 7). So the question concerning the date of John’s Letters is, Were they written prior or subsequent to John’s Gospel? On balance, the latter seems more likely. While it is possible that some of the connections with John’s Gospel in 1 John are based on a common tradition, in a few places the Gospel seems to be assumed. For example, 1 John 2:7–8 refers to and explicates the meaning of the new commandment of John 13:34–35 without naming it. In 1 John 5:6, reference is made to Jesus’ coming by “water and blood,” most likely referring to Jesus’ baptism and crucifixion, respectively (see the verbal parallel with John 19:34). Some, such as Carson and Moo, think the Johannine Letters were written to combat heretical misinterpretations of the Gospel, which would require a date for them after the Gospel. This seems entirely plausible. Yet even if the purpose for the Letters were construed differently, the conclusion that they postdate the Gospel would still appear to be the most probable in light of the parallels mentioned above. The best date, given the death of John at around the turn of the century and the dating of the Gospel in the early to mid-80s, is somewhere in the early to mid-90s.”¹

¹ Andreas J. Kostenberger, L. Scott Kellum, Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown*, (B&H Academic, 2009), p. 790–791.