

3 JOHN IN CONTEXT

First, let us set the scene. It is the early AD 80's. Jerusalem has been destroyed. The Jewish state no longer exists. Temple worship has ended.

The main characters are John the Elder, Gaius, Demetrius and Diotrephes.

BACKGROUND: Gaius met Paul on Paul's first mission journey in the city of Derbe. He traveled with and was instructed by Paul from Derby on to Attalia. He rejoined Paul at Derbe on the second journey. When they came to Corinth on Paul's second mission journey, Gaius remained there as an elder of that Church. The letter Romans was most likely written in Corinth during Paul's third journey. In closing the Romans letter Gaius is commended for his hospitality to the brothers and the church in Corinth. When Paul was in prison, the second time in Rome Gaius joined him to help and administer to him. After Paul was martyred, Gaius, on Paul's request, returned to the troubled Corinth Church.

Historical, non-scriptural documents indicate that over the next ten years Gaius and John became close friends. They developed mutual respect for each other's spiritual maturity and faith. At some time between AD 75 and AD 80, John asked Gaius to journey to Pergamum to stabilize that Church. Most theologians agree that Gaius was in Pergamum when John sent him the letter we now call 3rd John.

There is some historical evidence that 3rd John was a personal cover letter to Gaius. It is believed that it accompanied the letter to the local churches we now call 1st John. I believe this may be the case. If you clear your mind, read 3rd John, and then read 1st John I think you will find the contextual connection. I personally believe that 2nd John was a predecessor of first and third John, but that is another story.

Demetrius was a believer, student and trusted companion of 'John, The Elder'. Most theologians believe that it was Demetrius that carried the letters First and Third John to Gaius in Pergamum. He remained an undetermined length of time to help and give support to Gaius.

Diotrephes was a person who somehow gained great influence in the Church at Pergamum. Diotrephes seemed to be driven by pride, greed and power.

It is believed that Gaius, with the help of Demetrius and the support of the letter we call First John, was successful in dealing with Diotrephes. No mention of Diotrephes appears elsewhere in scripture or the historical documents of the late first or the second century. A despairing footnote on the effects of following pride, greed and power, yes, you do get your 15 minutes of fame. Alas, as in the case of Diotrephes there are no lasting accolades.

In conclusion, the letter 3rd John was most likely written at the same time as 1st John. It was written to his friend Gaius in the city of Pergamum, the leader of the Pergamum Church. This was 11 to 13 years after the martyrdom of Paul.

1st JOHN CONTENT:

- Gaius has the full support and blessing of **John the Elder**.
- Diotrephes is not in Christ and must be corrected.
- John is encouraging Gaius to stand firm.
- John is sending Demetrius as John's personal representative and aid to Gaius.
- Always hold to the truth and interact in love.