

No Greater Joy (3 John 1-4)

A Recap of 1-2 John:

The author of 1, 2, and 3 John (along with the Gospel according to John and Revelation) is none other than the disciple John, the son of Zebedee. John's five "books" were penned after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem (70 AD). John is most likely writing 1-3 John from Ephesus to Christian communities surrounding him.

1 John:

- After John composed his gospel, significant theological rifts developed within various Christian communities in response to his claim about the identity of Jesus of Nazareth. Many denied that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God Who came in the flesh (1 Jn. 4:2-3) and doubted the sufficiency of the atonement (1 Jn. 5: 6-13).
- Compounding these theological rifts was the relentless destruction wrought by false teachers (1 Jn. 4:1), persecution (Nero, Diocletian), and famine. For these reasons, many "departed" from their profession of faith. Some of them lingered in these Christian communities, causing problems, while others "planted" other buildings to propagate error and heresies (some were called "secessionists").
- They represented a minority who doubted the essential elements of the gospel and person of Christ. They were men who did not hold to the doctrine of Christ and His teaching, propagated by the apostle John.
- John writes his first letter (1 John) as a theological treatise to encourage proper Christian behavior and provide litmus tests on genuine and authentic conversion.

2 John:

- This follow-up letter addressed the "elect lady" and her "children" (the leader of the house churches and those in membership with it).
- Like 1 John, false teaching infiltrated these infant churches, compromising the teachings of John and other apostles and disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Jn. 7).
- Both 1 John and 2 John were general letters circulated to various Christian communities within Ephesus. No specific names are mentioned in 1 or 2 John.

1. The Request for the Beloved Gaius (v.1-2)

- The author (John) identifies himself as an "elder" (v.1) perhaps for several reasons: he is aged (in his 80s or 90s), respected, and held the office of elder (1 Tim. 3; Tit. 1) in a Christian congregation that was distinct from Gaius'.
- The primary recipient of the personal letter is Gaius (v.1), though he would have shared this letter with the "friends" (v.15) he held in common with the apostle John.
- Gaius was the first century's most common name for men in the Roman Empire. Scholars believe that there were at least four different Gaius' mentioned in the NT: The Gaius of Macedonia (Acts 19:29), Gaius of Corinth (1 Cor. 1:14; Rom. 16:23), Gaius of Derbe (Acts 20:4), and the Gaius of Asia Minor (to whom John 3 is addressed).
- Most of the early church met in homes (due to the primitive nature of the faith and persecution) whose owner may or may not have been the spiritual overseer of the church but who was influential in the congregation's life. Gaius was influential as the local Christian community most likely gathered in his home.
- John calls Gaius "dear friend" (Beloved) in v.1, 2, 5, and 11. These tender words of affection (v.1) are rare in this Greek construction in the NT.

- John's prayer, wish, and longing expresses his heart's desire for Gaius.
- John's request for Gaius is that "all will go well with you, that you would enjoy good health as your "soul goes well" (v.2).
 - A. All will go well with you: another way of wishing Gaius would have "a good journey," which would be synonymous with prospering in all circumstances.
 - B. Enjoy good health: this term is used by Luke to describe those who are "fit and well" or "safe and sound" (Lk. 5:31; 7:10; 15:27). John is wishing, wanting, desiring, and praying that Gaius will experience progress, vigor, and attainment.
 - C. As it goes well with your soul: Usually, the Greek word psyche is used in Johannine writing to mean one's natural life (John 10:11, 15, 17; 12:25; 13:37, 38; 15:13; 1 John 3:16). However, on some occasions, it can refer to the inner life that is distinct from one's body (John 10:24, 27).

John's prayer, wish, desire, and longing is that Gaius' ministry, health, progress, and life continue to be successful as his soul prospers.

2. The Report of and the Rejoicing in the Beloved Gaius (v.3-4)

The Report:

- John is informed of Gaius' extensive hospitality as Gaius welcomes inside his home traveling missionaries and other brothers and sisters (presumably) John's local Christian community (church).
- As these missionaries, and brothers and sisters, departed from Gaius and eventually returned to John, they reported Gaius' status to John.
- The reader is informed of Gaius' truth (your truth) as walking in "the truth." The testimony of Gaius is consistent with the teachings of Jesus, who is the Truth (John 14:6).
- Gaius was a balanced Christian who held the truth in love and who loved in the truth. His profession of faith was consistent with his possession of that faith.

The Rejoicing:

- The overflow of joy John receives after hearing the testimony of Gaius' life is incomparable as he pens, "I have no greater joy than to hear my children walking in the truth." This is a Hellenistic double comparative, which means "more greater." It is emphatic and emotive, which intends to draw out the supreme manifestation of joy in the elder John.
- The greatest joy for John is to hear (through the testimony of others) that his children (Gaius being one of them) are walking in "the truth." This indicates that "his truth" is birthed from "truth" or "the truth."
- "The truth" (v.4) has the definite article "the" in Greek. "Your truth" (your truth in your life) which has no definite article (v. 3), is birthed from the truth in v.4.
- Walking in the truth is the faithful adherence to the truth concerning Jesus Christ as heard from the beginning (1 John 4:11).
- The elder John loves Gaius in truth (v.1) and rejoices that Gaius' truth (v.2) is derivative from the truth they share (v.1, 4), which is found in the person and teaching of Jesus Christ.
- John has no greater joy than to hear testimony from others on Gaius' fidelity and faithfulness to the truth despite persecution, factions, divisions, and cultural pressures.