

SESSION 5

# THIS IS HOW WE KNOW

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2 & 3 JOHN

## TABLE TALK

- ▶ What have you learned thus far in our study that is new, inspiring, or challenging?
- ▶ How would you summarize the message of 1 John to someone who has never read it?
- ▶ Read through 2 John together. Note similarities between it, 1 John, and the Gospel of John

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# 2 JOHN

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## 2 JOHN - AN OVERVIEW

- ▶ Written by the "Elder" ("old man")
- ▶ To the "elect lady and her children" - probably not a person but a name for the church
- ▶ Clearly an epistle rather than a homily like 1 John
- ▶ And yet it is very similar to 1 John in terms of theme and writing style

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## THE GREETING - V. 1-2

- ▶ Typical Johannine language: love, truth, knowledge, abiding
- ▶ Elder directs his "love" to the community
- ▶ "Truth" = a Christological term referring to all who know the truth of God that is incarnate in Christ
- ▶ Truth "abides" in us (Holy Spirit) and will be with us forever
- ▶ To be "in the truth" is equivalent to Paul's "in Christ" - participation in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ

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## 2 JOHN 3 - BENEDICTION

- ▶ Standard convention of Roman letters
- ▶ Grace, mercy, and peace – consistent Christian greeting (Paul)
- ▶ "Grace" occurs only four other times in the Johannine literature, all in the prologue to the Gospel of John
- ▶ "Peace" only occurs in the farewell discourse and resurrection scene in the Gospel
- ▶ "Mercy" is found only here in the Johannine literature
- ▶ "In truth and love" are typical Johannine words - these are the basis for unity in the church and binds it together - John assumes unity in his audience

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## 2 JOHN 4-6

- ▶ “Some” walking in the truth (v. 4), thus the danger presented by opponents is very real - likely same opponents from 1 John
- ▶ v. 5 - Calls church back to the commandment “we have had from the beginning” (John 13:34; 1 John 2:7-11; 3:11-18) - love one another
- ▶ v. 6 - quality of that love: walking according to his commandments (again, the commandment you heard from the beginning) - commandment to love

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## 2 JOHN 7-8

- ▶ Greek “for” - because - John is overjoyed to see some walking in the truth because “many deceivers have gone out into the world” (v. 7)
- ▶ “Deceivers” = those who do not confess Jesus Christ has come in the flesh - they are antichrists!
- ▶ “Out into the world” - left the community, schismatics
- ▶ v. 8 “Be on your guard” - avoid contamination by association - “reward” = eternal life

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## 2 JOHN 9

- ▶ Deceivers were going beyond teaching of Christ (or, more accurately, John’s teaching about Christ)
- ▶ They are innovators who “do not abide” in the teaching of Christ - refers to Christological issues, doctrinal issues
- ▶ Core issue again is doctrinal - must believe that Jesus has come in the flesh
- ▶ One who does not abide in this doctrine “does not have God” but those who do abide have “both the Father and the Son”

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## 2 JOHN 10-11

- ▶ A warning to have nothing to do with purveyors of false doctrine
- ▶ Not extending hospitality - not allowing traveling false preachers a foothold
- ▶ Don't let the foxes into the hen house!
- ▶ Parallels to 1 John - pointing out the dangers of the antichrists
- ▶ "to welcome is to participate in the evil deeds of such a person"
- ▶ So much for inclusivity and pluralism - two modern values not in evidence here!

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## 2 JOHN 12

- ▶ The Elder hopes to visit the church, but needs to write more urgently in order to head off more potential schism
- ▶ "Face to face" (Greek: "mouth to mouth") - preferred mode of communication
- ▶ Reference to "joy" as an inclusio around the argument
- ▶ Conclusion so similar to 3 John that it might be that the author composed them at the same time to different audiences

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## 2 JOHN - TABLE TALK

- ▶ Given John's warning, how should the church deal with false teaching today?
- ▶ How do you determine what is false teaching and what is true? (refer back to 1 John)
- ▶ What should be our posture toward those who have left the faith?

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# 3 JOHN

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2 & 3 JOHN

## TABLE TALK

- ▶ Read 3 John together
- ▶ What themes do you see that are consistent with 1 & 2 John? What differences do you note?

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2 & 3 JOHN

## 3 JOHN - AN INTRODUCTION

- ▶ Personal letter to Gaius - common Roman name
- ▶ Perhaps a connection to Gaius of Romans 16:23 - a wealthy householder who could play host to other Christians in his home
- ▶ v. 1 - "whom I love in truth" - reappearance of Johannine theme - basis of love is truth; truth as a surrogate or synonym for Jesus

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### 3 JOHN 2-4

- ▶ Benediction lacking, but contains opening prayer of thanksgiving - convention in Hellenistic letters
- ▶ "soul" = *psyche* - "life"
- ▶ Praise for Gaius faithfully walking in "truth" - by reports of others (v. 3)
- ▶ Elder has no greater joy than "children" walking in truth (v. 4)
- ▶ Gaius demonstrates faithfulness by welcoming traveling believers even though they are strangers to him (v. 5)

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### 3 JOHN 6-8

- ▶ Basically a thank you note for hosting emissaries who likely came from the Elder himself
- ▶ They testified to Gaius' "love" before the rest of the church
- ▶ These emissaries/missionaries received no outside support, thus relied on hospitality of Christians like Gaius
- ▶ By supporting these missionaries, Gaius and those like him become "co-workers with the truth"

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### 3 JOHN 9-10

- ▶ The Elder is at odds with Diotrephes, who does not acknowledge the Elder's authority and puts himself first.
- ▶ Diotrephes spreads "false charges" against the Elder and refuses to extend hospitality to the missionaries; he also prevents others from welcoming them and expels these people from the church
- ▶ What the Elder writes in 2 John about refusing hospitality to false teachers is now being employed by Diotrephes
- ▶ Is this the reaction to what John commanded in 2 John?
- ▶ What we have here is not so much a sharp dispute about doctrine, but about jurisdiction and authority

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### A POSSIBLE REASON FOR THE LETTER - V. 11

- ▶ Diotrephes was opposed to the Elder on some grounds other than doctrine (if it had been a serious doctrinal issue we would expect the Elder to mention it and add correction)
- ▶ Gaius was a friend of the Elder and the Elder writes to rally support to his cause
- ▶ We don't get the sense that Diotrephes is one of the "antichrists" but is rather a believer in dispute
- ▶ The Elder urges Gaius to choose good over evil (v. 11)

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### DEMETRIUS - V. 12

- ▶ Perhaps the bearer of the letter?
- ▶ Typical convention for a writer to testify to the character of the letter bearer
- ▶ Perhaps Demetrius is an example of one who does "good" and is affirmed by everyone, especially the Elder.

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### 3 JOHN 13-15

- ▶ v. 13-14 - almost identical to conclusion of 2 John
- ▶ v. 15 - Peace - ref. greeting in 2 John
- ▶ Notice "friends" instead of "children" (2 John)
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### CONCLUDING NOTES

- ▶ Why is 3 John in the canon? Seems a dispute that is too specific and local
- ▶ Perhaps it has to do with apostolic authority - establishing the authority of one who was an eyewitness to Jesus vs. another who came in later (Diotrephes)
- ▶ Perhaps an establishment of John's writings as authoritative for the early church?

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### TABLE TALK

- ▶ What does 3 John teach us about conflict in the church?
- ▶ How does the church today recognize and bestow authority?
- ▶ How would you have handled this conflict if you were part of this church?

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# QUESTIONS?

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