

2-3 John

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Do you remember the Sword Drill?

“Sheathe swords” . . .

“Draw swords” . . .

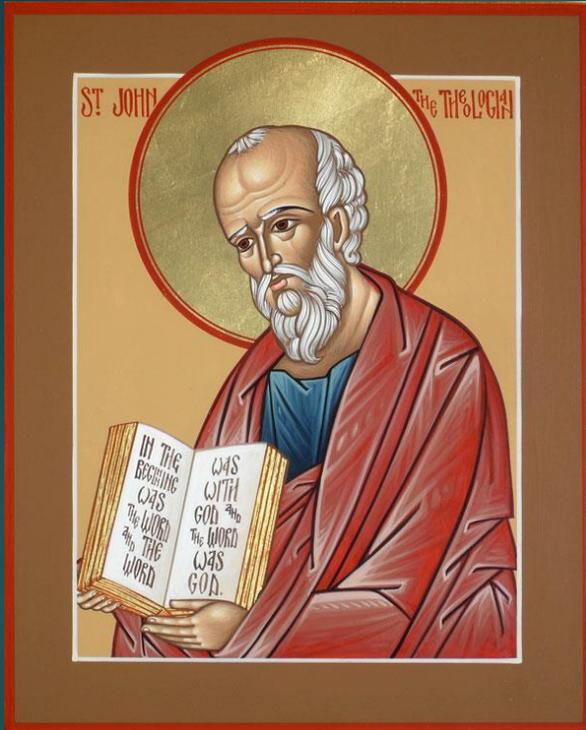
“Psalm 118:22” . . .

“Charge”

“For the word of God is living and active, **sharper than any two-edged sword**, . . .



Who wrote 2-3 John?



The presbyter / the elder

- ▶ Can refer either to an older person or a leader, regardless of their age
- ▶ Debate in Talmud what qualifies as a *zaqen*: Do you honor anyone with a “hoary head” or those who have achieved wisdom?

Papias, bishop of Hierapolis (fl. Early 2nd century)

And Papias, of whom we are now speaking, confesses that he received the words of the apostles from those that followed them, but says that he was himself a hearer of Aristion and **the presbyter John**. At least he mentions them frequently by name, and gives their traditions in his writings.

Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*. 3.39.7

Eusebius (ca. AD 325)

Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.25.9-10

What should we say of him who reclined upon the breast of Jesus, John, who has left us **one Gospel**, . . . ? And he wrote also **the Apocalypse**, but was commanded to keep silence and not to write the words of the seven thunders.

He has left also **an epistle** of very few lines; perhaps also a **second and third**; but not all consider them genuine, and together they do not contain hundred lines.

Irenaeus (ca. 180)

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.16.8

These are they against whom the Lord has cautioned us beforehand; and His disciple, in his Epistle already mentioned [2 John] commands us to avoid them, when he says: "*For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Take heed to them, that ye lose not what ye have wrought.*"

Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria

(AD 367), *39th Festal Letter* (Easter)

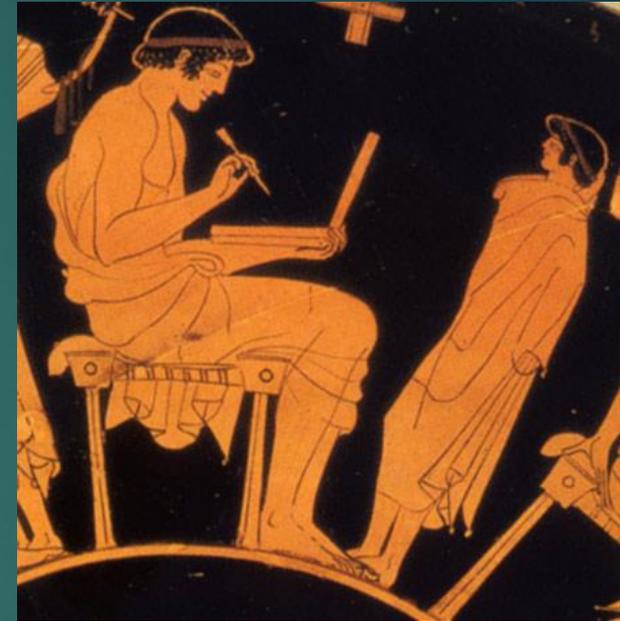
Again it is not tedious to speak of the [books] of the New Testament. These are, the four Gospels, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Afterwards, the Acts of the Apostles and Epistles (called Catholic), seven, viz. of James, one; of Peter, two; **of John, three**; after these, one of Jude.

2-3 John are classic ancient letters

1-3 John were written within a short period of time, perhaps no more than 10 years

Which came first GJohn or 1-3 John?

It could have been 3, 2, 1
John



When were 2-3 John written?



A question debated by scholars but many date these letters to the 90s.

John A. T. Robinson dated them as early as the 70s but not many scholars have followed him.

Recipient(s) of 2 John



The letter is addressed to “the elect lady and her children”

▶ A Christian community personified as a woman; its members described as “her children”

“elect” the same word used to describe Israel as “the chosen”

Purpose of 2 John



To encourage a house church or group of churches against false teaching

If you know the real thing (**the truth**), then you can spot the counterfeit

Theme: The Truth (2 John 1-4)

“Whom I love in the truth”

“All who know the truth”

“The truth that abides in us”

“Walking in the truth”

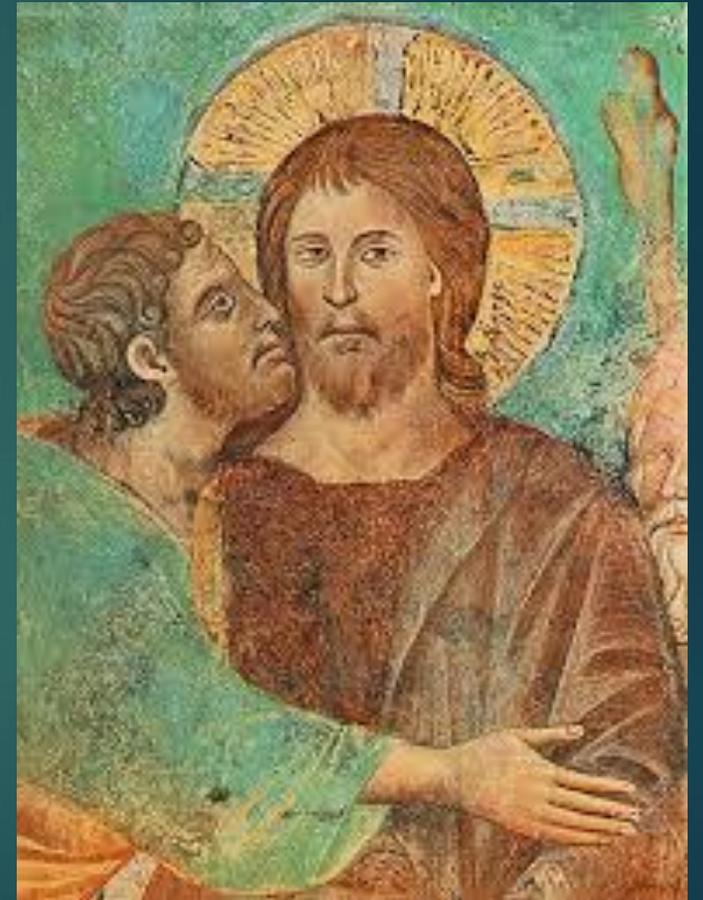
- ▶ Truth here is not an abstract concept but personal, relational.



Theme: Who is Jesus?

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess **the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh**. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.

2 John 7



Who is Jesus?



There are two ways to take this (“Jesus Messiah coming in flesh”):

1. When Jesus the Messiah came the first time, he did not come in the flesh.
2. When Jesus the Messiah comes the second time, he will not come in the flesh.

What is Gnosticism?



Gnosticism is not a single movement; it took on various forms based primarily upon the movements' leaders or their theological concepts.



What is Gnosticism?

Gnostics distinguished between **the True God**—considered to be utterly transcendent and unknowable—and the creator god. This ultimate God ushered wave after wave of other beings (emanations); each emanation was less pure and unknowable, finally reaching an emanation—a god—that could be known but one who was not particularly pure or holy. This **lower, inferior god** is usually identified with the creator god of Genesis.

What is Gnosticism?

Gnostics distinguished strictly **between matter (evil/corrupt) and spirit (good/eternal)**, considering this present material world as evil.

Humans have the misfortune of being a good spirit trapped in a material body. The spirit belongs ultimately to the sublime, spiritual realm.





What is Gnosticism?

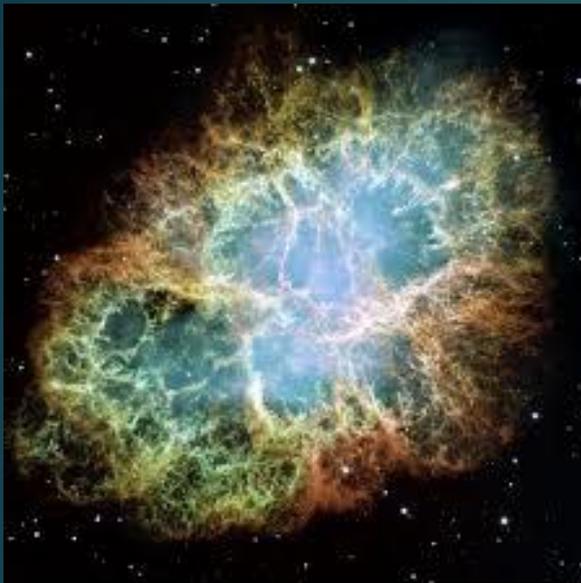
The problem isn't sin but that humans have **forgotten their true selves**. Now this malady can be defined as ignorance (they do not know their true origin and destiny) or forgetfulness (they have forgotten who they are).

What is Gnosticism?

Salvation consists of imparting **secret knowledge** to the humans and awakening them from their slumber.

To accomplish this salvation, the True God sends a redeemer from **the Pleroma** (the grouping of emanations) to bring this knowledge.





What is Gnosticism?

Since matter is evil, some Gnostics claimed that Christ only appeared to be human; he was in fact divine. This belief is known as **Docetism**, from the Greek word *dokeō* (to seem or appear). Likewise, the tendency arose in some circles to consider **the sufferings of the earthly Christ** as more apparent than real.

Who is Jesus?

Jesus is **God-made-flesh**, real flesh, flesh that aches, bleeds, bruises, sweats, burns, grows weak, dies, etc.

Jesus is **the Messiah**, that is, God's Anointed agent whose task is to liberate the world from sin, death, oppression, and injustice.



Hospitality



If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.

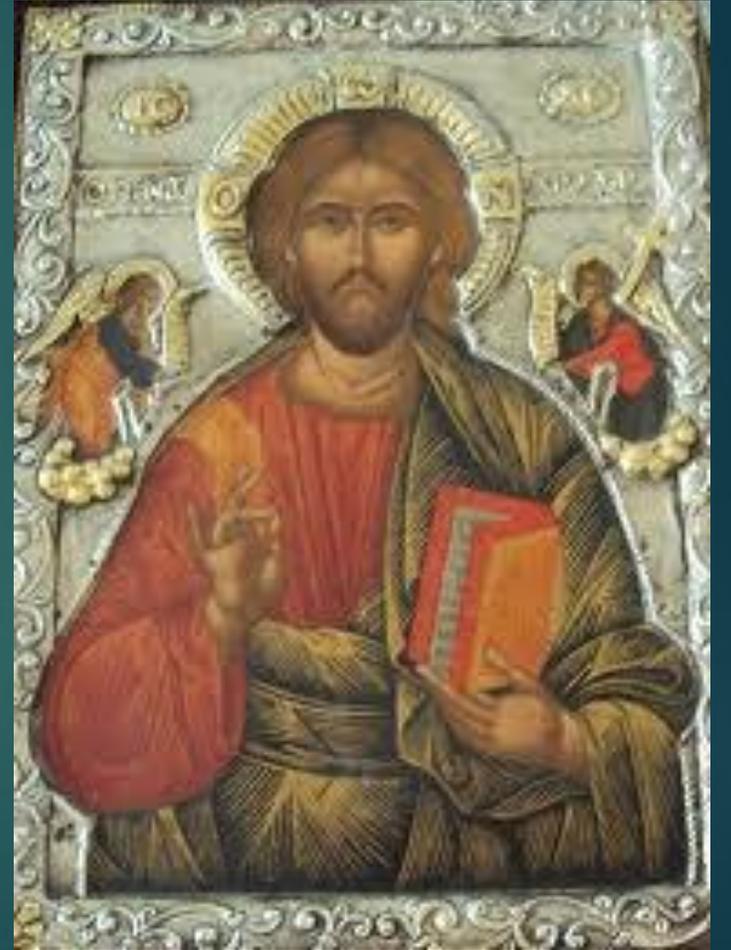
2 John 10-11

Purpose of 3 John

3 John is a personal letter to **Gaius**,
a letter of recommendation of
Gaius and Demetrius

It is a letter criticizing Diotrophes for
refusing to show hospitality to
traveling missionaries

- ▶ A schism was in process or had
already occurred



Loyal friend

Gaius is a **loyal friend** because he rendered service to the brothers, even to **strangers** . . . (3 John 5)

It is important to welcome traveling missionaries into your home and support them on their way.

“For on behalf of **THE NAME** they have gone out receiving nothing from the Gentiles” . . . (3 John 7)



A Scoundrel in the church



I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. ¹⁰ So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.

3 John 9-10

Peace be to you (3 John 15)

שלום

The webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight is what the Hebrew prophets call shalom. We call it peace but it means far more than mere peace of mind or a cease-fire between enemies. In the Bible, shalom means *universal* flourishing, wholeness and delight – a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Savior opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom he delights. Shalom, in other words, is the way things ought to be.

Cornelius Plantinga

Points for home



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1. Good things come in small packages. Get out of the few books and read all those others in the Bible.

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1. Good things come in small packages. Get out of the few books and read all those others in the Bible.
2. Truth is not a what . . . It's a who. Come to Jesus. Get to know Jesus, and you will know the truth . . . Truth is not relative . . . It's a relationship. Walk humbly in that truth.

Points for home



Points for home

1. Take seriously the incarnation. Incarnation means that your body and the goodness of this creation. God loves it and has begun to redeem it. Salvation is more than dying and going to heaven, it is experiencing God's shalom here and now even as we wait expectantly for God to redeem all the rest of this stuff.

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2. False teachers are out there. Avoid them and don't support them.
3. Share your home and your table with God's people, especially missionaries.

Many thanks . . .

Mark will be back next week.

If you have questions, thoughts, observations, be in touch with me:

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