

A Bird's-Eye View for Me and You III John

Well, a good life it is, knowing the Lord as our Savior and living for Him, and I would remind you once again that, if you do not know Him as your Savior, that you would ask Him to come into your heart even this very day.

It's good being with you once again, and today, we're going to look at the Scriptures in III John. We're continuing our study, "A Bird's-Eye View for Me and You," the books of the New Testament. And I would encourage you to, if you're in a position where you can have your Bible, open your Bible and follow along as we go through these lessons. Last week, of course, we looked at the book of II John.

Now the author of this book III John was the son of Zebedee, the apostle whom Christ loved in a special way. You can read John chapter 19, verses 26 and 27. Once again, I remind you that it wasn't that He loved John the apostle more. It was that they seemed to have had a very close relationship. In other words, John stayed close to Him, and if we could say this, he stayed closer to the Lord than the other people around. So, there was a special bond there from John to our Lord. And obviously here in the book of III John, the writer is the apostle John, presumably writing from Ephesus to a close friend in one of the nearby churches of Asia Minor.

And the epistle that we're looking at today is known as III John, and it's the shortest letter or epistle in the New Testament. And like II John, it is from the elder, but unlike II John, it is addressed to an individual, Gaius, and not to a local congregation. If you remember, the last time I mentioned about II John, I believe that John was writing to a local congregation in II John. Well, here, we see him writing to a specific person. And although he was writing to a specific person, the letter may have well been intended for a wider audience, and we know that today, that it's meant

for us, that it's for our admonition. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and it's profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness that the man of God or the people of God can grow in grace and knowledge, that all of us can gain knowledge and wisdom from studying the Word of God, and that includes III John.

The purpose of III John, the third book that we see here... I, II, and III John... is to encourage Gaius to continue extending hospitality to traveling emissaries, especially those who come from the elder... that's John... or who are loyal to him. He's saying, "Look, receive these people as me. Treat them the way you would treat me." And I'm sure that as Gaius read this letter, this epistle, that he took to heart what John was saying to him here.

Now, the elder that we read of here, which is John, is believed by most conservative scholars to be the apostle John. Now, why is that? Well, the three epistles of John bear similarity to concepts and language to the Gospel of John. You need to go back and compare the Gospel of John with these three epistles of John and you'll see that there is a great similarity in the writing, in the way that the books are presented to people. It doesn't mean that God is not the author. God is truly the author of the entire Bible. He simply used men to pen down the words. Now, they weren't like robots that sat down and God said, "Do this," "Do that."

Many times, they gave what they were seeing and what we see in these Scriptures that we've been studying is that what John saw as he walked with our Lord, he saw the miracles. He wrote those down, some of them, in the book of John. He saw our Lord crucified. He wrote that down in the book of John. He saw what was going on in the life and through the life of our Lord. He saw what was going on in and through the life of believers after

the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord after He ascended back into Heaven.

As we read and study about John, we see that he was one who had firsthand knowledge of our Lord, so, therefore, God did not say, "You have to do this," "You have to do that." He was simply writing down what had taken place. And then we see in these books, I, II, and III John, he's saying, "Look, I'm writing to you that you can have full assurance of salvation that you are to love one another, that you are to respect one another, that you are to watch out for false teachers." And this was written under the inspiration of our Heavenly Father.

Well, the date of the writing of the third epistle of John is about 90 to 95 A.D. and I remind you once again that it was before the persecution of Domitian, the Roman emperor.

The setting here is written to the beloved brethren whom John knew personally. And once again, that would be Gaius, and he probably wrote this from Ephesus where John had worked.

And key verses here, I believe, are verses 4-8. If you have your Bible, would you open that, III John 4-8. John says, ⁴*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.* ⁵*Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers;* ⁶*Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well...* Once again, he's asking Gaius to receive the people. Verse 7 says, ⁷*Because that for his name's sake they went forth...* They went forth because of our Lord... *taking nothing of the Gentiles*, he continues on in verse 7, and in verse 8, he says, ⁸*We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.*

Sometimes we find that there's, shall we say, there's competition between Christians, among Christians, and this shouldn't be. And I believe

that's another thing that John is trying to get across here. There should be no competition because we are fellow helpers to the truth. That is, if we abide in the truth, which is and who is the Lord Jesus Christ. We are to proclaim the Gospel, which is the good news that Jesus Christ was crucified, buried, and resurrected so that we who name Him as our Savior can have life, and that life is eternal through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So, therefore, we should not be at odds with other believers, but we should count ourselves as fellow helpers to them because of the truth.

And as we look at the theme of this book, I believe that this is continued here, fellowship with the brethren. We're to show hospitality according to III John 5-8. And then, we've read this in verse 8 that we are to receive fellow workers.

And as we look at III John 9-11, I believe that we see that we are to reject pride and self-exaltation. This goes back to the idea that we're not in competition. We should not hold ourselves up to be something we're not. We're all saved by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves; it's a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast, according to Ephesians chapter 2, verses 8-9.

But John writes here in verse 9-11, he says, ⁹*I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.* ¹⁰*Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.* ¹¹*Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.*

Well, this person, Diotrephes, evidently said things against John. He was causing problems within the church and John says, "Look, this guy thinks he's better than what he is. He's got pride." And we know, you and I know, that pride goeth before a

fall, before destruction, according to the Word of God. So this man was walking on dangerous ground, Diotrephes, and John is telling these people...he's telling us today that we are to reject pride and self-exaltation.

Well, what are some of the applications we can look at here? I believe that, first of all, Christians are not always what they should be. Verses 9 and 10... and we've read that. We're not what we should be. Sometimes even we who do not try to exalt ourselves, and we do not want to have that pride that creeps in, and sometimes it does creep in. But according to III John 9 and 10, that should not be. Sometimes, we're just not what we should be.

And secondly, I believe Christians often imitate other Christians. Verse 11 says, *Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.*

Why is that people gravitate sometimes towards the evil? Well, that answers the question. People are people. The Bible says there is none good, no, not one; all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. It's something that is in the human nature to follow something that is evil and that is not right, according to III John.

And then, I believe that what's being said here is those who follow the spirit of Diotrephes stand in danger of human correction. In other words, they are to be turned over. They are to be rejected of the church. It doesn't mean that we should not love them. It doesn't mean that we should not try to help them, but we need to let them know that they are in error.

It's been good being with you today, and let me remind you that we are studying through "A Bird's-Eye View for Me and You," the books of the New Testament. Well, what I'm trying to do is give you an overview, an oversight, of these books to get you so you will study the Word of God. And if you are, the Lord bless you for that. And if you're not, you need to get in the Word of God and study for yourself.

If you do not know Christ as your Savior, let me remind you that you can do that this very moment by saying, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart. I receive You as my Savior." For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

If you are saved, examine yourself. Are you living for Him? Are you the Christian that you need to be? Are you the example that you need to be to this lost and dying world? If not, bow your head. "Lord Jesus, forgive me for being prideful. Forgive me, Lord, for not serving You more. I'm sorry."

Let me invite you to go to our website this week, www.LRWM.org. You can download Bible study helps on that website. You can also write to me: Lewis Woodard, 497 Judith Avenue, Fruitland Park, FL 34731, and I'll be glad to send you free of charge a transcript of this program.

Until the next time, may the Lord bless you richly is my prayer.