

2 John

Authorship: In this letter, John merely calls himself “the elder.” This could refer to his age, or stature in the churches, or both.

Date: John penned this brief letter around AD 90 from the city of Ephesus.

Theme: Christians most love and live in God’s truth, but have nothing to do with error.

Recipients: The letter is addressed to “the chosen lady, and her children.” More than likely she is a Christian friend of the apostle, although some feel that perhaps John is using a metaphor here to refer to a local church and its membership. The location of the first reading is not known.

Background & Historical Situation: Apparently, a problem had developed from the normal and benevolent practice of showing hospitality to itinerant teachers and preachers. It was common in the first century for people to open their homes to those in the gospel ministry. (Jesus Himself was a frequent guest of Mary and Martha of Bethany as well as Peter in Capernaum.) But it appears that some Christians were inadvertently providing this type of support to false teachers. John writes this letter to condemn that practice while upholding the principle of hospitality which is fundamental to Christianity.

Purpose: First, to commend and encourage a godly woman and her children for their Christian living and testimony (2 John 1:1-6). Second, to warn them against entertaining or encouraging itinerant false teachers (2 John 1:7-11)

Key Passage: “Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son” (2 John 9).

Outline:

I. The Elder Greets the Elect Lady and Her Children (1-3)

II. Abiding in the Truth Is the Basis for Walking in Love (4-11)

- A. Commendation: Walking in the Truth Keeps the Command from the Father (4)
- B. Exhortation: Walking in Love Keeps the Command from the Son (5-6)
- C. Warning: Confessing and Keeping the Truth about Christ Determine the Circle of Fellowship in Love (7-11)

III. The Truth Is the Basis of Christian Fellowship (12-13)

Sources:

Elwell, Walter A. and Robert W. Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998).
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Willmington, Harold L. *Wilmington's Bible Handbook*. (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1997).