

2 JOHN

INTRODUCTION

There is little need for any exhaustive study of the claim 2 John has upon its place in the sacred canon of the New Testament, the enlightened opinion of the last one thousand years having appreciatively received it.

Both 2 and 3 John are both so obviously and intimately associated with 1 John, that all of the evidence for the first epistle adheres automatically to the two shorter ones. Adam Clark, Commentary on the Whole Bible, Vol. VI, p. 934, wrote, “The authority of the First Epistle of John being established little need be said concerning either the second or the third. If we regard the language and sentiment only, these so fully accord with the first, that there can be no doubt that he who wrote one wrote all three.”

Regarding the time of composition of these letters, and the persons to whom they are addressed, absolutely nothing is positively known. It is not even certain whether 2 John is addressed to an individual, or to a church.

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

“The elder . . .” The use of “elder” as an apostolic title is verified by the fact of the apostle Peter having used it in 1 Peter 5:1. Peter used “fellow-elder” indicating that others besides himself, in the apostolic group were still living. John’s use of “elder” could indicate that he alone of the sacred Twelve still remained alive.

A. Plummer, op. cit., p. 1, commented on this that, “*Elder* was not an unlikely title; other apostles were called *elders*; but John was *the elder*,” the last surviving of the Twelve.

“To the chosen lady and her children . . .” The “chosen lady” is a metaphorical reference to the church often spoken of in the New Testament

under the figure of a bride or a, pure women. J. W. Roberts, *The Letters of John and Jude*, p. 150, agreed that, “The most likely possibility, however, is that *the elect lady* is not a person at all but a personification for a local church.”

“And not only I, but also all who know the truth . . .” It is inconceivable that any prominent woman in the early church was known to “all who know the truth,” that is, every Christian on earth, although such an expression is understandable as a reference to a prominent congregation. John’s purpose of shortly visiting the church (verse 12) would indicate its prominence and importance.

“Who know the truth . . .” Here, the author of this letter continues in the same vein of thought that is found in 1 John.

Verse 2

“Which abides in us . . .” It is the truth resident in the holy apostles which is indicated by this, as indicated by John’s certainty that it would abide forever.

“Abides in us and will be with us forever . . .” Note the prophecy in this. John could see the approaching storms of persecution and hatred of the truth into which he and the others had been guided by the Holy Spirit, but he was supremely confident that nothing would ever be able to destroy it. It has proved to be gloriously true. All of the enmity and hatred against the New Testament has not succeeded in removing any of it, or diminishing the confidence that Christians have in it.

Verse 3

“Grace, mercy and peace . . .” Harvey J. S. Blaney, *Beacon Bible Commentary*, Vol. 10, p. 409, wrote, “This is not merely a wish, but a confident assurance. “Grace” is the favor of God toward sinners: “mercy” is the compassion of God for the misery of sinners, and “peace” is the result when the guilt and misery of sin are removed.”

From God the Father and from Jesus Christ . . .” This indicates that the assurance of grace, mercy and peace is not from God independently of the Son of God, being “from God in Christ.”

“In truth and love . . .” All grace, mercy and peace come from God in Christ, but the enjoyment of such blessings is contingent upon the recipient’s abiding “in the truth” and “in love” of the brethren as proved by his keeping the commandments of God.

Verse 4

“Some of your children . . .” One may only conjecture as to whether this could be a veiled charge that some of “her children” were not walking in the truth. What is affirmed here is that the apostle found a source of rejoicing in knowing that some were so walking. Any gospel minister whose life span has covered any considerable time knows what this is.

Verse 5

The full sentiments of this verse were commented on in (1 John 2:7-8).

Verse 6

In the writings of John, keeping God’s commandments is the only proof, either of faith or of love.

Verse 7

“Antichrist . . .” Of particular interest is this term, occurring here in the singular; however, it is quite clear that no single person is meant, from John’s identification of “antichrist” with “many deceivers.” It could be, however, that “antichrist” a spirit already working in John’s time, should be identified with “the lawless one” to be revealed shortly before the Second Coming; for, as Paul said, “the spirit of lawlessness” was already working in his time also (2 Thessalonians 2:7); but neither “antichrist” nor “lawless one” may be absolutely identified with “the man of sin,” except in the sense of being an ultimate development of the apostasy evident in “the man of sin.”

“Many deceivers . . .” J. R. Dummelow, *op. cit.*, p. 1061, wrote, “These were formerly members of the church who had apostatized. (1 John 2:19).

“Who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh . . .” The heresy of the false deceivers was that of denying the Incarnation. Of significance is the fact that the apostle did not yield in the slightest to any of their

speculations. The apostolic doctrine is that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God who was Christ, not only at His baptism, but in His death, burial and resurrection as well. With the apostle John, and all the New Testament teachers, the confession of full faith in Christ as the Son of God was central, imperative and absolutely essential to the Christian faith.

John R. W. Stott, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, Vol. 19, p. 208, wrote, “John here presented “a double warning:

- (1) for the Christians not to be deceived themselves (verses 8-9), and
- (2) not to give any encouragement to the false teachers (verses 10-11).”

Verse 8

“Watch yourselves . . .” The plural here denies this as a letter to a single individual; it is clearly a congregation of people that John had in view, some of whom were “walking in truth,” others of whom were deceivers.

“That you might not lose what we have accomplished . . .” David Smith, *The Expositor’s Greek New Testament*, Vol. V, p. 202, paraphrased the meaning writing, “See that you do not forfeit the reward of your labor; get a full wage. Be not like the workmen who toward the close of the day, do their work badly and get less than a full day’s pay.”

It should be remembered by all Christians that in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, the payment of the workers came at the close of day, “when evening had come.” All should remember that fidelity to the end of life is enjoined.

Verse 9

“Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ . . .”

The false teachers evidently considered themselves “advanced thinkers,” progressing beyond the teaching of Christ; but the apostle here denied the pretensions of such men. Whoever advances beyond the New Testament has advanced right out of Christianity. Leon Morris, *The New Bible Commentary*, Revised, p. 1272, wrote, “Our aim should be not to be *advanced*, but to *abide in the doctrine of Christ*.”

The Holy Spirit guided them into “all truth,” a fact that was much in John’s mind as he wrote these letters; and those theologians who fancy that they are able to discover more and more glorious things concerning God and the redemption of human souls, than those eternal truths revealed in the New Testament, are totally and radically wrong, that being the categorical affirmation of this verse 9.

James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 144, wrote, “The person who either neglects to teach any part of the doctrine of Christ, or who teaches what is not the doctrine of Christ is culpable, and does not acknowledge God.”

Note: The heresy of this age is that religious teachers may “go beyond” Christ’s teachings in any direction they please, or that they may eliminate from their doctrine any of the Lord’s teachings that they hold to be unnecessary or distasteful to themselves. John, warned all men that such departures or omissions remove men from any claim of having God. A proper appreciation of His truth would relegate a great deal of present day religiosity to the ash heap.

Verse 10

Is such an admonition as this verse contains uncharitable? Some have so alleged. Such reluctance, however, is due to a gross failure to understand, either the destructive and murderous result of false teaching, or the evil nature of false teachers. The men in view by the apostle here were immoral, self-seeking hypocrites, true children of the devil, deserving fully the treatment prescribed for them by the apostle John. Today, no less than when John wrote, there are false teachers who should be treated exactly as John recommended.

There are false teachers now whose denials are just as destructive of faith and virtue.

“Do not give him a greeting . . . “ R. w. Orr, *op. cit.*, p. 624, wrote, This signifies church approval, or commendation.” For a congregation of the Lord’s people to extend to false teachers housing, approval and recommendation would be for the church to preside at its own execution.

Verse 11

Present day Christians are very reluctant to receive this teaching, David Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 203, wrote that, “Heretics are our fellow-creatures, and our office is to win them. If we close our doors and our hearts against them, we lose our opportunity of winning them and harden them in their opposition.”

All such comments fail to take into consideration the identity of the men John was speaking about. They were false *teachers* of anti-Christian doctrine, having already acquired the status of open enemies of the Lord and of His church. What John said of them was absolutely in line with the admonition of Jesus Christ Himself who taught, concerning false teachers, that His followers were to “let them alone!” (Matthew 15:14) Hospitality and friendship extended to known enemies of the truth is a violation of our Lord’s word. Many a young Christian, unaware of the true nature of the enemy, as well as of the cunning seductiveness of error, have violated the prohibition here with a result of their own everlasting ruin.

Verse 12

“I hope to come to you and speak face to face . . .” This is literally, “I hope to come to be at your house.” (A. Plummer, *op. cit.*, p. 3) Both here and in verse 10, J. W. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 165, was of the opinion that “house” is indicative of a letter “written to a church,” being a reference to the “meeting place of the church.” In New Testament times, congregations normally met in private houses owned by members.

The apostle in this verse would appear to have been sending this letter as a signal of his coming to visit the congregation, which would account for the somewhat limited nature of the communication. He stressed in this only what he was to be considered of paramount importance.

Verse 13

Harvey J. S. Blaney, *op. cit.*, p. 411, wrote, “The epistle closes with greetings from the members of the church from which John wrote.”

The big thing in the letter is the instruction regarding “abiding in the doctrine of Christ,” not “going onward,” and the proper response to known enemies of the Faith.