

2 John

Author- The Apostle John, “The Elder” for both epistles.

Date- Cannot be nailed down with any certainty, but probably near the time of the writing of 1 John, probably in the 80s.

Background Second John is a letter to a local congregation “the “elect lady”, warning them about the danger of false teachers (the Gnostics in this context, see notes above) and how to respond to them.

Themes

- The danger of the Gnostic heresy and how to meet it and what to do about it.
- The responsibility of Christian hospitality.
- What constitutes the Biblical basis for fellowship- truth, and nothing else, not even love.
- The necessity of the practice of separation.

Place Written From Unknown. Tradition places John as the pastor of the church at Ephesus in his latter years, so Ephesus is the best candidate. Ephesus would be a good candidate since it was the intellectual center of Asia Minor and would be an important city for such a church to be planted. Paul had prophesied earlier in Acts 20:28-31 that false teachers would arise in this church and that came true in John’s day with the advent of the Gnostics in Ephesus and in Asia Minor.

There are no geographic references in the epistles that help us to identify an audience or a source of the epistles.

Names and Titles of Christ in 2 John

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| 1. Lord Jesus Christ 3 | 4. The Son 9 |
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Names and Titles of God in 2 John

1. Father 3,9

1. Introduction 1-3

1 ¶ The elder^a unto the elect lady^b and her children, whom I love in the truth;^c and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth;^d

1a This is John, who was quite aged by this writing (probably 70-80 years old) and the only surviving apostle. John also uses this title for himself in 3 John 1. The title “the Elder” was a term of endearment used by and of John. John doesn’t identify himself by name as the author of any of his books except Revelation. His gospel was a historical book and these kinds of books don’t have the author’s name on them. Prophetic books do carry the author’s name, as Revelation does of John, as it is important to know who was giving the prophecies involved.

1b It is unsure as to whether John refers to a literal, individual Christian lady or a specific local congregation. I tend to think he is writing to a congregation of believers rather than an individual. It could also refer to an individual lady who was a member of the congregation John was writing to. “Elect lady” what a noble title this is! If John is writing to a local church, then he refers to that church as a “lady”, not just a “woman”. She is dignified, has Biblical culture, self-respect and manners.

2 For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us,^a and shall be with us for ever.

3 Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

2. Love- The Old Commandment 4-6

4 I rejoiced greatly^a that I found of thy children walking in truth,^b as we have received a commandment from the Father.

5 ¶ And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.^{a-b}

6 And this is love, that we walk after his commandments.^a This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.

1c Love must be based on truth. The same also is true for fellowship, as you cannot fellowship what you do not love. Charismatics, compromisers and ecumenists often try to base fellowship on love rather than truth (or doctrine) and they end up fellowshipping every foul and unclean bird while rejecting genuine Bible-believers. You must have doctrine to establish fellowship and love.

1d There is only one truth, not multiple truths. There is not a Baptist truth, a Pentecostal truth, a Calvinistic truth, a Roman Catholic truth- only one "truth". Truth is exclusive and intolerant. Error tends to be more accommodating.

2a Truth dwells in us. As the Holy Spirit indwells the believer, and as the Holy Spirit is truth (1 John 5:6), the truth then dwells in us in and through the person of the Holy Spirit.

2b The security of the believer. Once saved, the Holy Spirit will not leave the believer. Backslidings and carnality "quenches" the Spirit but He does not leave. As long as the Spirit indwells us, then the truth will also indwell us. This is a confident assertion on John's part, not just a fanciful wish.

4a Expressions of thankful joy are common in the Paul's greetings, as in his introductions Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians and Philemon. There is, of course. No such greeting in Galatians since Paul is upset with their defection from the gospel of grace.

4b This brings no greater joy to a preacher, to see people he has ministered to (especially if they are young converts) going on with God in the truth. The opposite is also true. Nothing breaks a preacher's heart more than to see people falling away from the truth, especially if they have sat under his ministry for any length of time.

5a This commandment is repeated from John 13:34; 15:12 and 1 John 2:17; 3:23.

5b This is the divine love of the *agape*, not the human brotherly love of the *phileo*. We love as God loves, not because of some good thing we see in that person or because they are physically attractive to us or because we hope to get something from them. That is how humans love. He loves because it is His nature to love. This is an impossible way for us to love, naturally, unless we have the help from the indwelling Holy Spirit.

6a The test of true love to God is if we are keeping His commandments (John 14:15,21). How can we claim to love God if we are rebelling against the commandments that He gave us, to help us in ordering our lives and walk with Him?

3. Warning Against Deceivers 7-9

7 ¶ For many deceivers^a are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver^a and an antichrist.^{b-c}

8 Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought,^a but that we receive a full reward.^b

7a We get our word “planet” from this, which is a wandering star. Since these “planets” have no fixed location in the sky, they are useless for navigation. Since false teachers wander everywhere theologically, they are also useless for finding truth. There were many such deceivers in John’s day, and we know that their numbers and influence have only increased in our day and will continue to do so as we draw closer to the end of the age. The Lord warned of these deceivers, mainly in a tribulation context, in Matthew 24:5,24. John also warns against them in 1 John 4:1, so none of this revelation regarding false teachers is new and no Christian has any excuse to be ignorant about this threat or of their methods of operation.

7b The definition of a “deceiver” and “antichrist” in this context is one who denies the incarnation of Christ. John has the Gnostics in view here, who denied that Christ had a human body, as the believed that “spirit” could not co-exist with evil “flesh”. Cultists and false teachers usually err somewhere on the doctrine of Christ.

1. Mormons say Christ and Lucifer were brothers.
2. Jehovah Witnesses say Christ was not fully God.
3. Christian Scientists deny the deity of Christ.

John has the Gnostics in mind as he writes this, as Gnosticism was a major problem in the early church. Gnosticism can be defined as salvation by knowledge, based on the etymology of the word (gnosis “knowledge”, gnostikos, “good at knowing”). Gnostics were “people who knew”, and their knowledge at once constituted them a superior class of beings, whose present and future status was essentially different from that of those who, for whatever reason, did not know. When Gnosticism came into contact with Christianity, which must have happened very early in Church History, it immediately adopted much Christian thought and terminology. It acknowledged Jesus as Savior of the world, copies Christian ordinances, pretended to be an esoteric revelation of Christ and the apostles, and flooded the world with apocryphal Gospels to substantiate its doctrines. As Christianity grew, Gnosticism spread and claimed to be the only true form of Christianity, unfit, indeed, for the vulgar crowd, but set apart for the gifted and the elect. In this form, Gnosticism is very similar to freemasonry today. So strong was the threat that the Fathers devoted their energies to countering it.

7c “Antichrist” is someone opposed to Christ. Anyone who denies or attacks the doctrine of the incarnation is attacking the person and work of Christ, as any false teacher will do. If you are not for Christ, then you are against Him, and thus earn the label of an “antichrist”. John does not have “The Antichrist” in view here, but we have no doubt that when he appears, he will attack every cardinal doctrine regarding the person and work of Christ.

8a Apostasy and compromise can destroy and undermine any and all spiritual progress you may have made in your life. The ultimate loss of these rewards would take place at the judgment seat, when we are judged for our Christian lives and ministries. To begin well in the Christian life is important, but it is much more important to finish well and faithful. By abandoning the truth and compromising, we can undo all that we have done and undermine all the good that we may have wrought up to that point.

8b This reward comes at the bema seat. To receive a full reward is for us to receive all that we have earned and to lose none of it through unfaithfulness or apostasy. This does not apply to salvation, for that cannot be lost. But the rewards that make up the quality of our salvation can be lost. Going into apostasy will cost you at the judgment. The deceiver is a thief who will rob you of rewards in glory. There is the hope expressed by the subjunctive voice of the verb that we “might receive” these rewards. It is not certain that we will as there is always the possibility of apostasy or falling away. We do not hold to the

9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ,^a hath not God.^b He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.^c

possibility of the loss of salvation if one is genuinely saved, but the loss of rewards is a specter that always looms over us.

A Christian can lose many things:

1. His testimony Genesis 19:14
2. His health 1 Corinthians 11:29,30
3. His rewards 1 Corinthians 3:15
4. His millennial inheritance Colossians 3:24,25
5. His joy Psalm 51:12
6. His assurance 1 John 3:20-22
7. His life 1 Corinthians 10:10,11

But not his salvation

9a What is this doctrine? Whatever the Bible teaches about the person and work of Christ. If we hold to the orthodox doctrines of Christ as revealed in Scripture, then “we have God” and are in fellowship with Him. All false teachers and cults will be in error on some point regarding the doctrine of Christ.

1. Mormons consider Christ and Satan to be brothers
2. Jehovah Witnesses view Christ as a demigod, as taught by Arianism
3. Christian Scientists deny the deity of Christ
4. Oneness Pentecostals deny the trinity, identifying Jesus with both the Father and the Holy Spirit.
5. Unitarians deny the trinity and are very weak on the deity of Christ, if they hold to the doctrine at all
6. The Roman Catholic Church elevates Mary almost to the same level as Christ, thus weakening Him as the sole mediator between God and man
7. Any group that denies the trinity also ends up attacking the doctrine of Christ.

9b See 1 John 2:23. Two things identify the man who does not have God:

1. He who transgresses. “To step over, or deliberately cross over the line”. The man who deliberately sin and step over the line that God has drawn in their life, either practically or doctrinally, does not have God and is not saved. God gives the Christian the victory over his sin and he will no longer habitually practice them as he used to while he was yet unsaved. We are not talking about the occasional sin that every Christian is guilty of, but of the deliberate, willful, habitual practice of sin in full knowledge of what God says about that sin and with a full rejection of the means provided for by God to avoid that sin. This man is not saved for he does not have God. He also transgresses the doctrine of Christ as he rejects it and steps over it unto something else. You can transgress doctrinally as well as practically.

2. He who abides not in the doctrine of Christ. We have already discussed this man as John identified him as an antichrist in verse 7. How could an antichrist be saved? A man who rejects the Biblical doctrine of Christ is not saved since he has placed himself into deliberate opposition to the doctrine of Christ, and thus to the person and saving work of Christ.

Is this man lost? Yes. Romans 8:9 says that if we have not the Spirit of God then we are none of His. That man does not belong to God. Thus he is not saved. If a man does not have God, especially the Holy Spirit indwelling in his life as all Christians have, then he cannot be saved. A saved man has God and he also belongs to God. Conversely, the unsaved man does not enjoy such a relationship.

9c This is the opposite of the unsaved man above. A Christian abides in the doctrine of Christ. He accepts the Biblical revelation of what the Bible says about Christ. He then has both the Father and the Son, and they own him as well. Salvation then centers around an acceptance of the doctrine of Christ as the Bible reveals it.

4. Christology as a Test of Fellowship 10,11

10 ¶ If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine,^a receive him not into your house,^b neither bid him God speed:^c

11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.^a

5. Conclusion 12,13

12 ¶ Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

13 The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.

10a This will happen. You will come into contact with a man claiming to be a Christian. When you search him out, you will find that his Christology is flawed. You are then to break fellowship with that man. Some examples of how this will happen:

1. Two Jehovah Witnesses knock on your door. You ask them if they believe that Jesus is God. They will say that He is a created being and is a "god", or a demigod. By this confession, they acknowledge that they are deceivers and antichrists. You are not to allow them into your home but politely ask them to leave and to stop bothering you.

2. Two Mormons knock on your door (probably 19-year old "elders"!). You ask them of their doctrine of Christ. They may indeed admit that Jesus is God but He is not the only God. They are polytheistic, thus robbing Jesus of His uniqueness. After all, man may also ascend to godhood one day just as Jesus did. So their Christology is most unorthodox and they too are to be dismissed.

3. You go to a political conference that is strongly conservative and the keynote speaker is Sun Myung Moon, founder of the Unification Church. He wants you to help in to "reclaim America" and to defeat Communism. You must reject any fellowship or cooperation with because he teaches that Jesus failed on the cross and that God appeared to him in Korea and appointed him to be the new Messiah, to finish the work that Jesus started but failed. What a nut. His Christology is way out beyond left field. You must reject him as well.

4. Christian Science must also fall under this condemnation because they also reject just about every point of orthodox Christology.

5. We must reject Roman Catholic Christology since it portrays Christ as not the sole, sufficient Savior, but enshrines Mary as the co-mediatrix. Mary is elevated to deity, thus robbing Christ of His uniqueness. We therefore cannot fellowship Roman Catholicism.

10b There were many traveling false teachers in the early church. They would go from town to town, looking for a sympathetic ear and for an offering. Since there were no motels in this day, traveling preachers would be lodged in the homes of saints. A true teacher was to be extended this Christian courtesy. But if a false teacher, who denies the doctrine of Christ, is to receive no such consideration from the saints. They are not to be entertained nor are they to be encouraged or supported by the saints, but they are to be turned out and turned away. Better to let them starve in the streets. That might be one way to put an end to their damnable "ministries"!

10c We are not even to wish the apostate "Good bye" or "Good day" when he stands at our door. The next time a Mormon or Jehovah Witness stands at your door, be polite but firm. Do NOT allow him into your home. Ask him to remove himself from your property. Then do NOT tell him "good bye" or "have a nice day". They are to be marked as apostates and avoided by God's people (Romans 16:17) are to be turned away from (2 Timothy 3:5) and rejected (Titus 3:10).

11a You identify with his evil deeds if you offer him support or encouragement.

2 John

Observations regarding "truth":

1. "Men of truth" were sought to be judges in Israel- Exodus 18:21
2. God is abundant in truth- Exodus 34:6
3. God is a God of Truth- Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 31:5; Isaiah 65:16
4. God is to be served in truth- Joshua 24:14; 1 Samuel 12:24
5. Exhortation to walk with God in truth- 1 Kings 2:4; 2 Kings 20:3; Psalm 86:11; Isaiah 38:3; 2 John 4; 3 John 3,4
6. Dwelling with God requires speaking truth Psalm 15:2
7. All the paths of the LORD are truth- Psalm 25:10; Psalm 119:30 (way of truth); 2 Peter 2:2
8. All of God's works are done in truth- Psalm 33:4; Daniel 4:37
9. God's truth can preserve us- Psalm 40:11; Proverbs 20:28
10. God wants truth in our inward parts- Psalm 51:6
11. Mercy is associated with truth- Psalm 85:10
12. God is full of truth- Psalm 86:15
13. God will judge the world in truth- Psalm 96:13
14. God's truth is eternal- Psalm 100:5
15. The Bible as the word of truth- Psalm 119:43; John 17:17; 2 Corinthians 6:7; Ephesians 1:13
16. God's law is truth- Psalm 119:142
17. God's commandments are truth- Psalm 119:151
18. Truth can be bought and has a price- Proverbs 22:21; 23:23
19. Truth is fallen in the street in Isaiah's day- Isaiah 59:14,15
20. Valiant for truth- Jeremiah 9:3
21. Christ is full of truth- John 1:14
22. Truth came by Christ- John 1:17
23. Worship must be in truth- John 4:23,24
24. The truth shall make us free- John 8:32
25. Satan has no association with truth- John 8:44
26. Christ is the truth- John 14:6
27. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth- John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13
28. Sanctification through the truth- John 17:17,19
29. We can do nothing against the truth- 2 Corinthians 13:8
30. Truth is a fruit of the Spirit- Ephesians 5:9
31. Loins gird about with truth in the Christian armor- Ephesians 6:14
32. Damnation is the judgment for those who do not obey the truth- 2 Thessalonians 2:12
33. Election seems to be dependent upon belief in the truth- 2 Thessalonians 2:13
34. God wants all men to come to a knowledge of the truth- 1 Timothy 2:14
35. The church is the pillar and ground of truth- 1 Timothy 3:15
36. The word of truth needs to be rightly divided- 2 Timothy 2:15
37. Some men are unable to come to a knowledge of the truth- 2 Timothy 3:7
38. The Holy Spirit teaches us truth- 1 John 2:27
39. Love must be in truth- 1 John 3:18; 2 John 1; 3 John 1
40. There is a spirit of truth- 1 John 4:6
41. The Holy Spirit is truth- 1 John 5:6
42. The truth abides in us- 2 John 2
43. Fellowhelpers to the truth- 3 John 8