

Bible Study: 2 John

Author: the elder

Audience: the elect lady and her children

Date: unknown

Location: unknown

Theme: walk in His commandments

Genre: exposition (epistle)

Outline

Greeting and Salutation (1-3)

Walk in His commandments (4-6)

Beware of Deceivers (7-11)

Conclusion (12-13)

Observation

John emphasized the terms: truth, love and commandments

Grace, mercy *and* peace will be with us (i.e., all who know the truth)

He exhorts them to love one another (i.e., walk in His commandments)

He exhorts them to watch out for false teachers and the loss of reward

He condemns a specific heresy: denying that Jesus came in the flesh

He condemns heresy generally: not abiding in the teaching of Christ

He provides the antidote: do not receive false teachers or greet them

Interpretation

Who were the chosen lady and her children?

The letter is addressed “to the chosen lady and her children.” No personal names are used, and the suggestion that the recipient was named either Eklecta (the word rendered “chosen”) or Kyria (the word rendered “lady”) carries little conviction... It has therefore been suggested that the apostolic writer adopted a literary form in 2 John, in which a particular Christian church is personified as “the chosen lady” and its members are called “her children.”¹

What were the deceivers denying in verse 7?

The present participle “coming” (in the phrase “coming in the flesh”) focuses on the principle involved in the Incarnation: Jesus taking on (coming in) and continuing with a human nature (cf. 1 John 4:2). This truth about “Jesus Christ . . . coming in the flesh” is what the deceivers denied. Some taught that Jesus’ body was not truly human; it only appeared that way. That, of course, contradicted the truth of the Incarnation, that Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully human (Col. 2:9).²

¹John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck ed., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 2:905.

²*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 2:907.

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What is John talking about in verse 8?

The antichrists were a threat to the work of the Lord in which he (John) and they were mutually engaged. It should be noted that the phrase **be rewarded fully** shows that failure by the readers would not totally deprive them of reward. God would not forget what they had done for Him (cf. Heb. 6:10). But the fullness of their reward (cf. 1 Cor. 3:11-15) was threatened by the subversion of the antichrists.³

What did John mean by not receiving or greeting false teachers?

In the Greco-Roman world of John's day, a traveling philosopher or religious teacher was a familiar phenomenon. Christian preachers also traveled and relied on local believers for support and hospitality (3 John 5-8). But the readers of 2 John were urged to be discriminating. If someone "comes" to them (the implication is "in the role of a traveling teacher") without also bringing sound doctrine (didachen), he should be refused help... In Greek, "greetings" (*chairein*), was used as a cordial address of welcome or farewell, something like "I am glad to see you" or "I wish you well" (cf. Acts 15:23; 23:26; James 1:1).⁴

Some important passages dealing with heresy:

God holds teachers to a stricter judgment (James 3:1)

Those involved in heresies (factions) will not inherit the kingdom (Gal 5:19-21)

But, receive a brother who is weak in faith regarding debatable issues (Rom 14)

"In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity." Rupertus Meldenius

Application

A promise to claim: Grace, mercy *and* peace will be with us (2Jn 3)

A condition to meet: walk according to His commandments (2Jn 6)

A condition to meet: abide in the teaching of Christ (2Jn 9)

A command to obey: watch out for deceivers, loss of reward (2Jn 8)

A command to obey: do not receive or greet a false teacher (2Jn 10)

³*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 2:907.

⁴*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 2:908.