

2 John

1 The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in the truth, and not I only, but indeed all those who have come to know the truth,¹ **2** on account of the truth that remains in us and will be with us into the age.² **3** Grace, mercy, and shalom—from God the Father and from Jesus the Messiah, the Son of the Father—will be with us in the truth and love.³

4 I rejoiced exceedingly when I found out that some of your children are living in the truth just as we have instruction from the Father.⁴ **5** And now, I ask you, lady, not as writing a new instruction to you, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.⁵ **6** Indeed, this is love, that we live according to His teachings. This is His teaching, just as you heard at the beginning, that you should live in it,⁶ **7** because many deceivers have gone out among those who live in the present realm, who do not acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, although he has come in the flesh. This is deceit and opposition to the Messiah.⁷

8 Watch yourselves so that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but, instead, you receive the full reward.⁸ **9** Everyone who keeps advancing and does not remain in the teaching of the Messiah does not have God. The one who remains in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.⁹ **10** If someone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not say to him, “Rejoice.”¹⁰ **11** For the one who says to him, “Rejoice,” has his evil deeds in common with him.¹¹

12 Even though I have many things to write to you, I do not wish to do so with paper and ink, but I hope to come to you and to speak face to face in order that your joy may reach its fullest extent.¹² **13** The children of your chosen sister greet you.¹³

¹ Ὁ πρεσβύτερος ἐκλεκτῆ κυρία καὶ τοῖς τέκνοις αὐτῆς, οὓς ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ, καὶ οὐκ ἐγὼ μόνος ἀλλὰ καὶ πάντες οἱ ἐγνωκότες τὴν ἀλήθειαν – The “chosen lady” here is not an individual but more likely a gathering of Christians in a local city to whom John is sending 1 John that ends up going to many cities in the Asian area of western Turkey. These are people John is assuming have been chosen by God before he brought the creation into existence, that they obtain eternal life through belief in Jesus.

John loves them as those who are “in the truth” in the sense that they are authentic believers in Jesus as a result of the truth of the gospel which has been presented to them (ἀλήθεια is used 5 times in 2 John). And not only does John love this particular gathering of Christians, but so do also all other believers in Jesus who have been presented the gospel and embraced the truth about him.

John, the elder, who is also probably the last remaining apostle, is writing this letter as a group cover letter for 1 John, which is a circular being sent to various Christian communities in Asia, western Turkey, to clear up a dispute that is going on within them because of false teachers who are denying Jesus is the Messiah and claiming that he was only a good teacher or rabbi. They are also promoting the idea that even Jesus would want everyone to focus on obeying the Mosaic Covenant. This whole idea of truth is central to John’s corresponding with all these people because of the false teachers. They claim to know the truth better than John, and they claim that Jesus never said that he was the Messiah. But John, a true apostle, knows the truth and is reminding his readers that Jesus definitely is the Messiah.

This cover letter for 1 John could easily have been used for the church of each city to whom John sent it.

² διὰ τὴν ἀλήθειαν τὴν μένουσαν ἐν ἡμῖν καὶ μεθ’ ἡμῶν ἔσται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα – The truth of the gospel produces love for one another as Christians, because it remains embedded in us (=John and all those who have embraced it). This of course is because of God’s miraculous and gracious work of regenerating Christians, and the truth that will remain a part of who they are even into the final age of the eternal Kingdom of God where Jesus will rule over them as king.

³ ἔσται μεθ’ ἡμῶν ἡ χάρις ἔλεος εἰρήνη παρὰ θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ παρὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἀγάπῃ – God’s grace, mercy, and promise of a shalom-like life in eternity will be “ours” as believers because of God’s truth and the love which He has shown us through Jesus.

Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Father = the final and eternal Davidic King (cf. 2 Samuel 7). This is the central truth about Jesus that people have come to know and believe and that results in their loving God and his people. The false teachers deny this about Jesus. John is affirming it.

⁴ Ἐχάρην λίαν ὅτι εὑρηκα ἐκ τῶν τέκνων σου περιπατοῦντας ἐν ἀληθείᾳ, καθὼς ἐντολὴν ἔλάβομεν παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς – John is glad that some of believers in this church (actually each church if this letter is sent to all of them) have not bought into the lies of the false teachers but are still holding to the apostolic message.

The instructions that they are following come through the apostles from the Father of Jesus, the Son of God and final king of the Davidic Covenant, and, therefore, through the Son, Jesus (cf. 1 John 1:1-5). In other words, the false teachers are wrong.

⁵ καὶ νῦν ἐρωτῶ σε, κυρία, οὐχ ὡς ἐντολὴν ἔγραψον σοι καινὴν ἀλλ’ ἣν εἶχομεν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους – John is saying that we apostles have had the truth of Jesus as the Messiah from the beginning of their experience with him (cf. 1 John 1:1). And the result of this truth is that we Christians love one another, not reject each other the way the false teachers are rejecting people who believe in Jesus as the Messiah. This is his encouragement to them as they persevere in their belief.

⁶ καὶ αὕτη ἔστιν ἡ ἀγάπη, ἵνα περιπατῶμεν κατὰ τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ αὕτη ἡ ἐντολή ἐστίν, ἡ καθὼς ἠκούσατε ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἐν αὐτῇ περιπατήτε – The Father’s teachings are those that came through Jesus as the Messiah, so that the result of believing them is to love God and one another. The readers of this letter heard this teaching when they were first introduced to the gospel, and they should act in every way they can in their lives in line with this gospel from God the Father.

⁷ Ὅτι πολλοὶ πλάνοι ἔξηλθον εἰς τὸν κόσμον, οἳ μὴ ὁμολογοῦντες Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐρχόμενον ἐν σαρκί· οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ πλάνος καὶ ὁ ἀντίχριστος – John has experienced many people who have come into the Christian community and been exposed to the apostolic message of Jesus as the Messiah and then left the community thinking that they know better what the truth of the Bible is, i.e., that its focus is the Mosaic Covenant and that Jesus is not the Messiah. These false teachers has rejected Jesus as the Messiah although he has appeared and proven himself to be such through his miracles and propitiatory offering.

To say that Jesus is not the Messiah is simply a lie and the height of deception. cf. 1 John 2:18,19; 4:1

⁸ βλέπετε ἑαυτούς, ἵνα μὴ ἀπολέσητε τὴν ἐργασάμεθα ἀλλὰ μισθὸν πλήρη ἀπολάβητε – John urges his readers to continue in their belief of the apostolic message which results in obtaining God’s eternal mercy and life. If they give up their belief by following the false teachers who deny that Jesus is the Messiah, then they are also giving up the outcome—eternal life. John says literally “the full wage.” Thus, the existential nature and importance of human choices and belief in the truth from God. And the choice to believe can be difficult, especially if people are ostracizing you from their “church.”

⁹ Πᾶς ὁ πρῶτος καὶ μὴ μένων ἐν τῇ διδασκίᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ θεὸν οὐκ ἔχει ὁ μένων ἐν τῇ διδασκίᾳ, οὗτος καὶ τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱὸν ἔχει – John is first referring to a person who at first seems to embrace the apostolic message, but then who goes beyond it and distorts it by adding elements to it that are not actually a part of the biblical worldview, even though some of the elements come from the Bible (e.g., the Mosaic Covenant) but are misplaced and misapplied

in the false teachers' (Jews') worldview, thus causing them to reject Jesus as the Messiah (in this case, explicitly), which is also demonstrated by mistreating and even rejecting authentic Christians (cf. 1 and 3 John (especially Diotrephes)).

The problem today is that this same kind of adding to the biblical worldview from platonic, mystical, pagan, and American worldviews and misapplying biblical elements so as to distort the biblical worldview actually occurs within the community that uses the label Christian and requires that church participants stay within the limits of "orthodoxy." John's perspective is that only those who remain within the true, biblical, and apostolic limits of the message are theists (cf. 3 John 11).

John refers to the person who stays within the limits of the apostolic teaching of the gospel. This is the person who can truly claim to have a genuine relationship with God and his Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

¹⁰ εἴ τις ἔρχεται πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ ταύτην τὴν διδαχὴν οὐ φέρει, μὴ λαμβάνετε αὐτὸν εἰς οἰκίαν καὶ χαίρειν αὐτῷ μὴ λέγετε – If a false teacher who claims to have heard straight from Jesus that he is not the Messiah comes into their city, but he denies the apostolic message of John, then these Christians should not welcome them as teachers into their house churches. And do not communicate to these false teachers that they can rejoice in God's promise of salvation and eternal life the same way that authentic believers can.

Distinguishing between good teachers and bad teachers can be much more difficult today, especially since we do not have the actual persons of the apostles with whom to consult but are seeking to understand the same apostolic documents that the bad teachers are studying. Add to this that no one fully and accurately knows the biblical truth since the death of the apostles, and we have a situation that requires extreme humility, grace, love, and ongoing discussion.

¹¹ ὁ λέγων γὰρ αὐτῷ χαίρειν κοινωνεῖ τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ τοῖς πονηροῖς – Jesus and the apostles have made it abundantly clear that Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah. To reject this claim is to reject truth and the God behind this truth, which, therefore, is an evil act towards God. The readers should not want to share in this evil by supporting the false teachers who deny Jesus as the Messiah (cf. 1 John 1:3 for similar use of noun form, ἡ κοινωνία, that refers to sharing in something. In the case of 1 John 1:3 and here in 2 John 11, it refers to sharing in an understanding of the gospel—either sharing the truth that Jesus is the Messiah or sharing the lie that he is not).

¹² Πολλὰ ἔχων ὑμῖν ἔγραψα οὐκ ἐβουλήθην διὰ χάρτου καὶ μέλανος, ἀλλ' ἐλπίζω γενέσθαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ στόμα πρὸς στόμα λαλήσαι, ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ τῶν ἡμῶν ᾖ πεπληρωμένη – If this is a cover letter for 1 John to the gathering of Christians in each city of Asia, then John is saying that he has specific things he wants to say to each gathering individually that would be in addition to the content of 1 John. But he would rather see them personally and say them face to face.

¹³ Ἀσπάζεται σε τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἀδελφῆς σου τῆς ἐκλεκτῆς – By "the children of your chosen sister," John refers to the Christians in the city of Ephesus, who, like the Christians to whom he is writing have been selected by God before the creation to become authentic believers in Jesus as the Messiah and receive eternal salvation. These Ephesian Christians join John in sending greetings to the readers of this letter in the various cities in Asia, western Turkey.