

2 John

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

4 I rejoiced exceedingly that I found out that some of your children are walking in the truth (ἐν ἀληθείᾳ) just as we received instruction (ἐντολήν) from (παρὰ) the Father.⁴ **5** And now, I ask you, lady, not as if I were writing a new instruction (ἐντολήν) to you, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.⁵

6 Indeed, this is love, that we walk according to His instructions (τὰς ἐντολάς). This is His instruction (ἡ ἐντολή), just as you (pl.) heard from the beginning, that you (pl.) walk in (ἐν) it,⁶ **7** because many deceivers have gone out into the world, who do not acknowledge Jesus the Messiah as coming in the flesh. This person is the deceiver and the anti-Messiah.⁷

8 Watch yourselves so that you do not lose the things we have accomplished, but, instead, you receive the full reward.⁸ **9** Everyone who leads the way and does not remain in the teaching of the Messiah (ἐν τῇ διδασκίᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ) does not have God. The one who remains in the teaching (ἐν τῇ διδασκίᾳ), this one has both the Father and the Son.⁹

10 If someone comes to you (pl.) and does not bring this teaching (ταύτην τὴν διδασκίαν), do not receive him into your household, and do not say to him, “Rejoice.”¹⁰ **11** For the one who says to him, “Rejoice,” has in common his evil deeds.¹¹

12 Even though I have many things to write to you (pl.), I do not wish to do so with paper and ink. But I hope to come to you and to speak face to face so that your joy may be made full.¹²

13 The children of your (sing.) chosen sister greet you.¹³

¹ Ὁ πρεσβύτερος ἐκλεκτῇ κυρίᾳ 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 an entire gathering of Christians in a local city to whom John is sending 1 John, which ends up being sent to many cities in the Asian area of western Turkey. “Her children” are the individuals within the Christian community in the city. These are people who, John is assuming, have been chosen by God before he brought the creation into existence, and who will 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. The concept of love here as well as in the rest of the Bible is not a feeling but a choice to be supportive, kind, forgiving, and committed to others in regard to their holistic well-being, i.e., their spiritual, emotional, psychological, and physical health. In this case (which really is the only case in which true “love” can take place), it is to like-minded people of authentic belief in Jesus as the Messiah.

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 false teachers 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 in order to obtain God’s blessings and eternal life.

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 the other apostles, 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 individually and as a group even into the final age of the eternal Kingdom of God where Jesus will rule over them as king. This truth will be among them and all other believers as that which informs them throughout eternity. It will be their cultural and societal norm as a worldview forever in contrast to the lies and false ideas that have permeated all human cultures from the beginning, starting with Adam and Eve in Genesis.

In 1 John 3:23, John writes, “**3:23** And this is His teaching—that we believe in the name of His Son, Jesus the Messiah, and we love one another just as he gave this instruction to us,” after commenting on the importance of guarding Jesus’ teachings.

³ ἔσται μεθ’ ἡμῶν χάρις ἔλεος εἰρήνη παρὰ θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ παρὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἀγάπῃ – God’s grace (His undeserved movements to cause sinners to meet the condition of eternal life), mercy/forgiveness, 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. These, along with the truth mentioned in v. 1, will be with and among authentic believers for all eternity. These will be the marks of their eternal culture.

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. How did John find this out? Most likely by questions that were posed to John by this and other gatherings about the teaching of the false teachers. The mere fact that these people are asking John for clarification of the gospel (and perhaps letting him know that they think that the false teachers are wrong) is a good sign that they believe the truth of the gospel.

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.

The fact that John says “some” indicates that he grants that certain “Christians” may end up revealing that they are not genuine in the belief because they become persuaded by the false teachers and deceived by their lies.

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. This is not a new instruction to these people, because it is what they heard when someone (John? Paul?) first presented the gospel to them. In this way his ideas are old for them—as old as their first exposure to the truth of Jesus as the Messiah.

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Messiah, and we love one another just as he gave this instruction to us,” after commenting on the importance of guarding Jesus’ teachings.

⁶ καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη, ἵνα περιπατῶμεν κατὰ τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ· αὕτη ἡ ἐντολή ἐστίν·, “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 “Οτι πολλοὶ πλάνοι ἔξηλθον εἰς τὸν κόσμον, οἱ 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 have rejected Jesus as the Messiah although he has appeared and proven himself to be such through his miracles and propitiatory offering. Each one of them is a deceiver of people and obviously opposed to the “Messiah” per se, because they are rejecting the truth of God the Father.

cf. 1 John 4:2 By this you know the spirit of God. Every spirit that acknowledges Jesus to be the Messiah, as having come in the flesh, (πάν πνεῦμα ὃ ὁμολογεῖ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα) is from God, 4:3 and every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus as such is not from God. Indeed, this is the spirit of opposition to the Messiah, which you have heard that it is coming. And, indeed, it is now already in the present realm.

As in regard to 1 John 4:2, there are probably Jews who believe that the Messiah will be more than a man, i.e., a theophany and not merely a flesh and blood man as Jesus was. But what about his being a descendant of David according to the Davidic Covenant?

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

⁸ βλέπετε ἑαυτοὺς, ἵνα μὴ ἀπολέσητε τὴν εἰργασάμεθα· ἀλλὰ μισθὸν πλήρη ἁπολάβητε – 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 ὃς προάγων καὶ μὴ μένων ἐν τῇ διδαχῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ θεὸν οὐκ ἔχει· ὁ μένων ἐν τῇ διδαχῇ τῇ, 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, Jewish, 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 ἔγραψεν οὐκ ἐβουλήθην διὰ χάριτος καὶ μέλανος, ἀλλ’ ἐλπίζω γενέσθαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ στόμα πρὸς στόμα λαλῆσαι, ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ τῶν ἡμῶν πληρωμένη – 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 to receive eternal salvation. These Ephesian Christians join John in sending greetings to the readers of this letter in the various cities in Asia, i.e., western Turkey.