

2 JOHN

Introduction

Author. Although some have suggested that the author might have been a man distinct from the Apostle, John, namely "John the Elder" the author is most likely the aged apostle. The similarity of this work to both the Gospel of John and the first epistle strongly suggest that the author was John, the son of Zebedee.

Date. The best conjecture is probably 85-90 A. D. from Ephesus.

Occasion. The addressees of the letter, "the chosen lady and her children" is ambiguous and could have one of two referents. First, the address could refer to an individual lady in one of the churches along with her family or second, it could refer to an individual church and its members. While not conclusive, the latter is preferred because: 1) no personal names exist in the epistle (as opposed to 3rd John where 3 personal names are listed), 2) it is not uncommon to have nations and cities personified as female personages, including a church (Ephesians 5:22-23; 2 Corinthians 11:2), and 3) the epistle uses plural pronouns between verses 5 and 13 as though John was addressing a group of believers.

It seems likely that both 2nd and 3rd John were sent along with 1 John as personal messages. 1 John was a circular letter, sent to a community of churches in the area of Ephesus. Evidently the apostle realized that two situations required a specific address and thus he wrote these two very brief notes to be left at those places. This letter addresses John's concern of a certain "lady" (either a church or specific person within a church) who was receiving, and thus helping, heretical teachers on their way. The missive then encourages the recipients to continue walking in truth and to refrain from helping false teachers in any way.

Message Statement. *Walking in the truth is demonstrated by loving one another and not investing in the work of false teachers.*

Argument

- 1A SALUTATION 1-3
Whether the "lady" is a specific person or a church is difficult to tell, though the latter seems more likely. John's identification of himself as the "elder" is probably meant to remind his readers of the fact that he was an eyewitness of the life of Christ; there were only a few such eyewitnesses left by this time and they were all very "elderly." Like the first epistle of John, the emphasis here is upon knowing and walking in the truth. The proper demonstration of that truth is the focus of the next verses.
- 1B TEACHING CONCERNING THE TRUTH 4-6
John evidently saw the need to reemphasize the importance of walking in the truth. This is best demonstrated by obedience to the commands of Christ, not the least of which, is loving the brothers. In this, the letter is clearly built on the theology of John.

