

2 John

- Theme:** Truth and Love
- Author:** Apostle John
- Recipients:** “The elect lady and her children” (v. 1). Probably a local church in Asia Minor
- Date of Writing:** A.D. 85-100
- Place of Writing:** Ephesus (?)
- Occasion:** The danger of false teachers infiltrating the church
- Purposes:** Challenge believers to:
1. Walk in truth
 2. Obey the commandments
 3. Love one another
 4. Guard the teachings of Christ

2 John

Theme: Truth, Love, and Obedience

| | Love the Truth | Live the Truth | Look for the Truth | Long for the Truth |
|----------|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | Embrace it (1-2) | Belief / Creed (4) | Recognize the Deceptive (7) | Fullness of Joy (12) |
| | Enjoy it (3) | Behavior / Conduct (5-6) | Resist the Destructive (8) | Fellowship of the Family (13) |
| | | | Reprove the Destitute (9) | |
| | | | Reject the Dangerous (10-11) | |
| | 1 | 3 | 4 | 6 |
| | 7 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| Focus → | Character | Conduct | Confession | Compassion |
| Action → | Love | Walk | Look | Come |

Key Words: Truth, Love, Commandment(s), Walk, Doctrine, Antichrist, Father, Abide

Introduction to 2 John

I. Author

In both 2 and 3 John, the author identifies himself as “the Elder.” The following similarities suggest that these letters were penned by the same author: 1) The author is identified as “the Elder” in both epistles (2 John 1; 3 John 1). 2) The recipients are those “whom I love in truth” (2 John 1; 3 John 1). 3) They are the two shortest books in the N.T.—2 John is 245 words and 3 John is 219 words. 4) They have complementary themes. 5) The author rejoices because his “children walk in truth” (2 John 4; 3 John 4). 6) He hopes to see his audience shortly (2 John 12; 3 John 14). 7) The reception of itinerant missionaries/teachers is the historical context for both (2 John 7-11; 3 John 5-10).

Furthermore, 2 and 3 John share certain characteristics with 1 John: 1) The emphasis on “truth”—In 1 John, “truth” (*aletheia*, Gk.) occurs 9 times, and in 2 and 3 John “truth” occurs 11 times. 2) The reference to “Antichrists” who deny that Jesus Christ has “come in the flesh” (1 John 4:3; 2 John 7). 3) The observation that genuine love involves obedience (1 John 5:3; 2 John 6). 4) The declaration that the command to love is not new (1 John 2:7; 3:11; 2 John 5-6). 5) The statement that those who do evil have not seen God (1 John 3:6; 3 John 11).

The common features of 1, 2, and 3 John indicate that all three were written by the same author. This cumulative evidence suggests that the author was John, the apostle of Jesus. If these letters were written by John the apostle, why would he call himself “the elder”? The term “elder” (*presbuteros*, Gk.) can refer to an older individual (e.g., Luke 15:25) or to a person who functions in some official capacity (e.g., Luke 7:3; 1 Tim. 5:17, 19). Both nuances may be involved in the Johannine use of “elder.” On the one hand, if the Apostle John is the author, he would have been an old man at this time. On the other hand, “elder” would be an accurate expression to explain the apostle’s role among the churches to whom he wrote. The fact that the author describes himself as “the elder” implies that his audience would have immediately recognized his identity and authority.

II. Date and Place

This epistle was probably penned from Ephesus between A.D. 85-100. However, the date, place, and order of these letters cannot be determined with certainty.

III. Recipients

2 John is addressed to the “elect lady” (*eklekte kuria*, Gk.) and her children. Some argue that it was written to a specific woman and her family. However, a more plausible theory suggests that the author personified a particular local church as a “lady” and the members as “her children.” If this is the case, 2 John is not the only N.T. book to symbolize the church, either local or universal, in this fashion (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:23-24; 1 Pet. 5:13; Rev. 21:9).

IV. Purpose

1 and 2 John reflect a comparable background; in each book, the author warns against the propaganda of false teachers and offers encouragement to genuine believers. Particularly, 2 John cautions its readers about receiving heretics into their home or church (v. 10). Like 1 John (see 1 John 4:2-3), this epistle characterizes these “antichrists” as people who have compromised the doctrine of Christ (v. 7). Though believers are to exercise love (v. 5), this love must be discriminating. Genuine love does not include the acceptance of false doctrine. Along with this admonition, the author expresses his joy that his “children” are “walking in truth” (v. 4) and exhorts these believers to continued faithfulness.

“Truth or Consequences”

2 John 1-13

- I. Love the Truth 1-3
 - 1. Embrace the truth 1-2
 - 2. Enjoy the truth 3

- II. Live the Truth 4-6
 - 1. Be concerned with what you believe (creed) 4
 - 2. Be concerned with how you behave (conduct) 5-6

- III. Look for the Truth 7-11
 - 1. Recognize the deceptive 7
 - 2. Resist the destructive 8
 - 3. Reprove the destitute 9
 - 4. Reject the dangerous 10-11

- IV. Long for the Truth 12-13
 - 1. Experience the fullness of joy 12
 - 2. Experience the fellowship of the family 13