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THE HOLY BIBLE **NKJV** REFERENCE GUIDE

NEW TESTAMENT

BOOK 63

2 JOHN



Saint John the Evangelist by Jan van Bijlert

SUMMARY

John did not identify himself by name in this letter, but he did adopt the term elder for himself. There has been some debate about whether an author named John the Elder wrote this letter (as well as 3 John, which is addressed the same way) or if John the apostle was using a different title for himself.

However, the earliest church tradition from the second century on testified in unison that this letter and its companion, 3 John, were written by the apostle, not by a mysterious and unknown elder.

In fact, an apostle using the term elder for himself was not at all unprecedented. Peter did that very thing in his first epistle.

John offered little in the way of detail in the short letter we call 2 John. Nothing in the circumstances John discussed in the letter would lead a reader of the time to think that it did not go to the same churches that received 1 John.

The apostle addressed the letter to the chosen lady and her children, a mysterious phrase that has been much debated. It either refers to an actual woman or serves as a metaphor for a church.

In either case, whether to a smaller family group joined by blood or to a larger one joined by confession, the application of the letter should remain unchanged. With this letter's thematic similarity to 1 John, it is best to suggest that John wrote from Patmos in about AD 90.

Second John makes clear what our position should be regarding the enemies of the truth. Whereas 1 John focuses on our fellowship with God, 2 John focuses on protecting our fellowship from those who teach falsehood.

The apostle went so far as to warn his readers against inviting false teachers into the house or even offering them a greeting. Such practices align the believer with the evildoer, and John was keen on keeping the believers pure from the stain of falsehood and heresy.

John began his second epistle proclaiming his love for the chosen lady and her children, a love he shared with those who know the truth. From the reports he had received, he understood that these believers were following the teachings of Christ.

He summed up this kind of lifestyle in the exhortation to love one another, a clear reference to the great commandments of Jesus, to love God and love your neighbor. In other words, those who walk in the truth should be people who love others.

But they should be cautious whom they love. Deceivers and false teachers had infiltrated the church. People who taught falsehoods about the person of Jesus, teaching that He was not truly a man but only appeared to be one.

This early heresy, called Docetism, required the strongest possible response from John. So the apostle warned the true believers away from these false teachers. John's encouragement, then, was not simply to love but to love others within the limits that truth allows.

SUMMARY Continued

John's strong encouragement to the believers in 2 John involved loving one another. However, John did not leave love undefined but described it as walking according to His commandments.

This echoes the teaching of Jesus in John's gospel, where the Lord told His followers, If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. Our love is dependent on our obedience. When we don't obey, we don't love.

Often we get in the mind-set that our obedience to God affects only ourselves. But that simply is not true. Our actions, whether obedient or disobedient, have ripple effects far beyond our own limited vision of a circumstance.

Consider your own life. In what ways might your obedience or disobedience impact those in your immediate circle of relationships? Second John reminds us not only of the dangers of falling away from the truth but also of the importance of making obedience a priority in our lives, for ourselves and for those most important to us.

The Book of 2 John is largely concerned with an urgent warning concerning deceivers who were not teaching the exact doctrine of Christ and who maintained that Jesus did not actually rise in the flesh but only spiritually. John is very anxious that true believers should be aware of these false teachers and have nothing to do with them.

John describes love not as an emotion or feeling, but as obedience to the commandments of God. Jesus reiterated the importance of the commandments, especially the first and greatest commandment, love for God, and the second, love for one another.

Far from abolishing the Old Testament law of God, Jesus came to fulfill it by providing the means of its fulfillment in Himself.

It is extremely important that we check everything we see, hear, and read that claims to be Christian with the Scriptures. This cannot be too strongly emphasized because one of Satan's greatest weapons is deceit.

It is very easy to be taken in by a new and exciting doctrine that appears to be based on Scripture but which, if examined closely, is in fact a departure from the Word of God.

If what appears to be happening does not line up explicitly with Scripture, then this is false and not of the Spirit, and we should have nothing to do with it.

NKJV SELECTED SCRIPTURE

1:3 Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

1:6 This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.

1:7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

NKJV SCRIPTURE Continued

- 1:9** Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.
- 1:10** If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him;
- 1:11** for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.

BIBLE TIMELINE

92 AD

John Writes his Second Letter

2 John 1

MAP REFERENCES

