

CHAPTER 3

2 JOHN

Authorship and date

[See above, Introduction to Johannine Epistles]

Addressee

v. 1, “To the elect lady,” ἐκλεκτῆ κυρίᾳ *eklekte kuria* (cf. v. 5, where *kuria* is used by itself)

Possibilities:

- 1) The elect lady (unnamed)
- 2) The lady Electa
(This view is unlikely in view of the similarity in v. 13, “the children of your elect sister”; Kistemacher notes that this name is not found in extant Greek literature.)
- 3) Symbolic for a church

In favor of a church:

- 1) No personal names, no characterization of her
- 2) “You” used in both singular and plural
- 3) “Lady” appropriate symbol for church (“children” used for Christians in 1 John)

In favor of an individual:

- 1) Easiest and most natural interpretation
- 2) 3 John written to individual; likely for 2 John too
- 3) Sustained allegory hard for whole letter (no such letter in first 3 centuries A.D.)

Arguments seem to favor individual, unnamed lady and her children

Outline of 2 John

1. Introduction, vv. 1-3

Note letter format

οὓς *hous* (masculine plural, referring to neuter plural noun “children”), “whom I love in the truth”—agreement in sense over gender

“In truth” = “sincerely”

“Know the truth” = gospel

v. 3, Grace, mercy, peace; similar to Paul

2. Body of the letter, vv. 4-11

John in this epistle begins as he has written in 1 John, with a general exhortation to live a life marked by truth, obedience, and love. At this point he is particularly concerned about false teachers who are traveling around, denying apostolic teaching. They will appeal to her for lodging and support when they are in her region. John is warning her against cooperating with them or helping them in any way.

a. The lady’s children, v. 4

“I was very joyful,” John’s reaction to Christians living in obedience

ἐκ τῶν τέκνων σου *ek ton teknon sou*, “some of your children”

Perhaps did not know about all of them, or perhaps not all of them obedient

b. The commandment of love, vv. 5-6

v. 5, Virtually same as 1 John 2:7

v. 6, Virtually same as 1 John 5:3

c. The threat of false teachers, vv. 7-11

This section is the heart of the letter, and apparently the immediate motive for writing it.

v. 7, Doctrine of deceiver = antichrist

“Not confessing Jesus Christ coming in the flesh”

Refers to incarnation, not second coming

Basically a gnostic, docetic heresy

v. 8, Warning against losing their reward

Two text variants:

“That you do not lose . . . but you may receive” (UBS {A})

“That we do not lose . . . but we may receive”

“The things we have worked for” (UBS {B})

“The things you have worked for”

Probable reading: “Beware of yourselves, that you do not lose the things which we have been working for, but that you receive your full reward.”

By receiving and helping false teachers, the elect lady and her children would undo the good work they had been doing, and would thereby lose the reward they would have received for their labors (cf. 1 Cor. 3:10-15).

v. 9, Relation of doctrinal apostasy to true faith

Danger of “going ahead,” beyond revealed doctrine

v. 10, Main command of the epistle

1st class condition

Protasis: “if someone comes . . . and does not bring”

Apodosis: “do not receive him . . . and say ‘greetings’ to him”

Receiving into house has idea of hospitality, lodging

This command applies to false teachers on a teaching mission, not to unbelievers in general

Loyalty to God's truth more important than human friendship or "manners"; in some situations a Christian must be "rude" (examples of prophets, Christ, apostles)

This command even more imperative if lady's house was used a church (or if "lady" is symbolic for a church)

v. 11, Additional reason for the command

To help a false teacher teach against Christ is to take part in that false teaching oneself

3. Conclusion, vv. 12-13

v. 12, John's coming visit

v. 13, Greetings from relatives

Children of her elect sister (nephews and nieces)

Possibly (if "lady" is church) members of sister church

A few textual witnesses favor church idea