

The Second Epistle Of John



A Study Guide With Introductory Comments, Summaries, And Review Questions

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This study guide was designed for adult Bible classes, though it might be suitable for junior and senior high classes as well. Some have used it for personal devotions, and others in small study groups.

- **Points to ponder** for each chapter are things I emphasize during the class.
- **Review questions** are intended to reinforce key thoughts in each chapter. That you might know what answers were intended by the questions, I have included them in this guide. There is a “student edition” available with answers deleted.

The Second Epistle Of John

Introduction

In the 1st century A.D., the early church enjoyed remarkable growth and spread throughout the world at that time (**Ac 8:5; Ro 10:14-18; Col 1:5-6,23**). What accounted for this spread of the gospel?

There were likely several factors, but one was **the hospitality** of the early Christians...

- Paul was able to travel and depend upon Christians opening their homes to him - cf. **Phm 1:22**
- He encouraged Christians to support those who were teachers of good things - **Ga 6:6**
- John commended and encouraged those who provided lodging and support for traveling missionaries - **3Jn 1:5-8**

Showing such hospitality was not without its potential for supporting the spread of false teachers and their doctrines. It would be easy for teachers of error to take advantage of the Christians' natural propensity to be hospitable to strangers. Thus it was necessary to counsel Christians to use proper discernment in sending traveling teachers on their way.

The Second Epistle of John, consisting of just one chapter, addresses this very problem.

Author

The author identifies himself as "The Elder", believed by most conservative scholars to be **the apostle John**. The **internal evidence** that supports this conclusion:

- The **three epistles** attributed to John utilize much the same language and ideas
- All bear similarity to concepts and language to the **Gospel of John**
- The term "elder" would be a fitting description of John as the author writing in his old age

As for **external evidence**, Irenaeus, a disciple of Polycarp (who in turn was an associate of John), quotes from it and mentions the apostle John by name. Both Clement of Alexandria and Dionysius, living in the third century A.D., credit John with being the author.

Recipients

The epistle is addressed to "the elect lady and her children." Taken literally, the epistle is written to **a particular woman and her children**. Many scholars understand this to be the case (e.g., Plummer, Ross, Ryrie). Some have even supposed the Greek words for "elect lady" may refer to given names, such as: Electa the Lady, The chosen Kyria, Electa Kyria.

Taken figuratively, it could refer to **a local church**. Scholars who hold to this view include Brooke, Bruce, Marshall, Stott, and Westcott. They understand that "elect lady and her children" (**1**) and "children of your elect sister" (**13**) refer to two particular congregations.

Desiring to allow the most obvious meaning of Scripture to be the most correct meaning, I am willing to accept the literal view.

Place and Date

Ephesus is usually suggested as the location from which John wrote this epistle, as he was known to live there in the later years of his life. Estimation of the date of writing varies widely, some placing it before the destruction of Jerusalem (70 A.D.). Most however place it around **90-95 A.D.**

Purpose and Theme

In such a short letter, the **purpose** is rather straightforward and twofold:

- Encourage brotherly love, and keeping the commandments of God - **2Jn 1:5-6**
- Warn against supporting or encouraging false teachers - **2Jn 1:10-11**

Based on **2Jn 1:7**, the false teachers were likely precursors of the Gnostics (see introduction to 1st John). As for the **theme**, I would suggest:

Walking in truth and love

Outline

Here is a simple outline of the book, from the **ESV Study Bible...**

Greeting: The Elder's Love (**1-3**)
 The Elder's Joy And Request (**4-6**)
 The Elder's Concern (**7-8**)
 The Elder's Warning (**9-11**)
 Closing: The Elder's Farewell (**12-13**)

Review Questions

- 1) Who is author of The Second Epistle Of John?**
 - The Elder, likely John the apostle who wrote the gospel of John
- 2) Who were the original recipients of this epistle?**
 - Literally, the elect lady and her children; figuratively, a local congregation
- 3) When was it written?**
 - Most date it from 90-95 A.D.
- 4) What has been suggested as its two-fold purpose?**
 - To encourage brotherly love, and keeping the commandments of God - **2Jn 1:5-6**
 - To warn against supporting or encouraging false teachers - **2Jn 1:10-11**
- 5) What has been suggested as its theme?**
 - Walking in truth and love
- 6) What are the main divisions of this epistle as outlined above?**
 - Greeting: The Elder's Love (**1-3**)
 - The Elder's Joy And Request (**4-6**)
 - The Elder's Concern (**7-8**)
 - The Elder's Warning (**9-11**)
 - Closing: The Elder's Farewell (**12-13**)

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Chapter One

The Elder greets the elect lady and her children (1-3), expressing joy over hearing her children were walking in truth, with a plea to love one another (4-6). He then warns of deceivers (antichrists) who deny Jesus as coming in the flesh, telling her not to receive into her home those who do not bring the doctrine of Christ (7-11). Hoping to see her soon, he concludes with greetings from the children of her elect sister (12-13).

Points To Ponder

- Walking in truth and love, abiding in the doctrine of Christ
- Identifying antichrists, refusing to support false teachers

Review Questions

- 1) What are the main points of this chapter?**
 - Greetings - **2Jn 1:1-3**
 - Walking in truth and love - **2Jn 1:4-6**
 - Beware of deceivers and false teachers - **2Jn 1:7-11**
 - Farewell - **2Jn 1:12-13**
- 2) What four phrases related to truth are used by John in his greeting? (1-3)**
 - Love in truth, known the truth, truth abides in us, in truth and love
- 3) What caused John to rejoice greatly? What plea did he make? (4)**
 - That children of the "elect lady" were walking in the truth
 - That they love one another
- 4) How does John define love? (6)**
 - That we walk according to His commandments
- 5) Who does John describe as "a deceiver and an antichrist"? (7)**
 - One who does not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh
- 6) Why did John counsel self-reflection? (8)**
 - That we not lose those things we worked for, to ensure we receive a full reward
- 7) What happens if one transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ? (9)**
 - He does not have God
- 8) What phrase clearly contradicts the Oneness doctrine of the Godhead? (9)**
 - "...both the Father and the Son"
- 9) How was one to respond to those who did not abide in Christ's doctrine? (10)**
 - Neither receive him or greet him, lest one shares in his evil deeds