

2nd JOHN

INTRODUCTION

- I. 2nd John, unlike 1st John is a personal letter.
- II. It is the length of an ordinary private letter of the time (which could be written on a standard size piece of papyrus).
- III. The similarity of 2nd John with 3rd John in length (3rd John is about a line shorter), structure and style justifies their description as “twin sisters”.
- IV. 2nd and 3rd John are among the New Testament writings that had the hardest struggle for canonical recognition due to:
 - A. Their brevity.
 - B. Their private nature.
 - C. The comparative seemingly unimportance of their contents.
 - D. Combined, these things caused them to be less widely circulated and read in the early church and were looked upon with suspicion.
- V. The external evidence of their canonicity is that they are quoted by certain early church fathers (Irenaeus c 140-203; Clement of Alexandria c 155-215; the Muratorian Canon c 170; Eusebius c 265-340; Jerome c 340-420) and witnesses nearest to John are favorable to the apostolic authorship.
- VI. The internal evidence denotes that both 2nd and 3rd John employ characteristic expressions found in the gospel and 1st John. More than half of 2nd John follows the doctrinal terminology and thinking of 1st John. Both contain John’s practice of emphasizing a point by stating it positively and negatively (2Joh.9; 3Joh.11).
- VII. The author refers to himself as simply “the elder”, not to hide his identity, but because he was so well known and his authority was firmly established with them.
 - A. The use of the term “the elder” instead of apostle is parallel to 1Pet.5:1
 - B. Further, the absolute use of the term “the elder” marks his position with them as exceptional and would not have been employed by an ordinary elder.
 1. The authority that the author claimed is far greater than ever attached to the office of elder or presbyter.
 2. The ministry that the author is engaged in these epistles – sending out deputies and receiving their reports, supervising a wide circle of churches, visiting them, and giving them directions – is precisely the sort of ministry the apostle John is known to have carried on in his later life in Ephesus.
 3. That John was the sole surviving apostle, its use would be particularly distinctive to them as the highest authoritative office still extant.
 4. We can conclude that the term “the elder” with the definite article was used in the absolute sense of John among all other elders and churches in Asia Minor.
- VIII. There are two views as to the recipients of 2nd John.
 - A. The allegorical view holds that John is writing to a local church and its members.
 - B. The more natural reading is to take the simple words of the epistle as referring to an actual lady and her children and household based on:
 1. A reference to her children (vs.4).
 2. A reference to her sister (vs.13).

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3. A reference to her house (vs.10).
 4. Furthermore, as John makes clear in the gospel and his 1st epistle, whenever saints are being addressed corporately (such as to a local church), he uses the diminutive form of “children/tekniōn – tekniōn (little children) rather than teknon – teknon (adolescent) that simply denotes an individual relationship as in 2Joh.1,4,13 and 3Joh.4.
 5. The format of 3rd John that is definitely written to an individual uses the same form of address.
 6. While the epistle may be addressed for the edification of a local church, the prima facie impression created by the words refer to a certain lady.
- IX.** The occasion and time of writing for 2nd John.
- A.** The time of writing is naturally concluded as immediately following 1st John circa 90-95AD.
 - B.** It was occasioned by John’s knowledge of the persistent efforts of false teachers in the area where she lived.
 - C.** Aware of their efforts to gain access to homes in their infiltration of churches, he writes telling her not to aid such types.
 - D.** It gives opportunity for John to make clear that separation from these types was as much an individual responsibility of application as corporate.
 - E.** A follow up letter of this type to a personal friend of John’s and further circulated within the church would be appropriate to ensure believers that the apologetics outlined in the 1st John are designed to arm individual believers as well as local churches corporately.
 - F.** No matter what royal imperatives churches corporately may disregard in application does not alleviate the individual believer from her or his own responsibilities before God.
 - G.** As 3rd John makes clear, there were those with obvious influence amongst the saints of these churches that disregarded the directives of sound authorities. Cp.3Joh.9-10
 - H.** While 2nd John addresses the potential hazard and abuse of not separating from heretical communicators, 3rd John has an opposite example of abusing this doctrine by separating from sound communicators.
 - I.** The epistle also gives him opportunity to urge the family to continue with Bible doctrine.

OUTLINE

- X.** Introduction: vss.1-3
- A.** Identification of author and recipients: vs.1
 - B.** The cause for relationship and writing expressed: vs.2
 - C.** Affirmative greeting: vs.3
- XI.** Praise, exhortation, explanation and warning concerning heresy: vss.4-11
- A.** Praise: vs.4
 - B.** Exhortation: vs.5
 - C.** Explanation: vs.6
 - D.** Reason for warning: vs.7a

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- E.** The creed of the deceivers: vs.7b
 - F.** The consequences of heresy: vss.8-11
 - 1.** Self-examination: vs.8
 - 2.** Examination of others: vs.9
 - 3.** Remedy: vs.10
 - 4.** Consequences for failure to apply: vs.11
- XII.** Conclusion: vss.12-13
- A.** Face-to-face communication is preferable: vs.12
 - B.** Parting salutation: vs.13