

1. **INTRODUCTION:** The Epistles [letters] written by the Apostle John actually form a composite message to the Church along with his Gospel and Revelation. As with all Scripture, they are written to speak into a specific occasion of need in the Church at that time with application made relevant through hermeneutic interpretation. In understanding what was intended for his original hearers, we can more properly interpret the documents and then apply relevant insights to our present day environment. The following is a brief discussion of 2 John with an analysis of who wrote it, why it had been written, and how we might now apply it.

2. **AUTHOR, DATE, PURPOSE FOR WRITING; and HISTORICAL TIMEFRAME:**
 - a. The similarities between 1 John and 2 John make a strong argument for having been written by the same author.
 - b. The content supports a very close relationship between 1 John and 2 John. Some scholars suggest that 2 and 3 John are companion letters that actually preceded 1 John. The conclusion of 2 John [vs 12-13] seems to support this concept. Since John had planned on delivering a longer and more developed message to this church in person, presuming John was unable to visit this church as he hoped (vs 12), the more detailed letter of 1 John would have been a reasonable solution. There is credibility to this notion in the content itself, and it certainly fits the well with the overall narrative of these letters.
 - c. The letter states that it was written to a “chosen lady and her children” – vs 1. Some who hold to a literal interpretation of this verse suggest this is a woman who is a friend of John’s. Those who hold to a more figurative interpretation of this verse suggest this was written to a particular church [lady] and its congregation [children]. This later view is more widely accepted by scholars.
 - d. Another interesting factor is the verb tense used in the text. John used “second person plural” in verses 6-12, while the “second person singular” is employed elsewhere. This later second person singular is used exclusively in 3 John. The subject matter in 2 John is in general very much like 1 John. This both supports the presumption that 2 and 3 John preceded 1 John, and also supports the destination of a congregation rather than a woman and her family.
 - e. The general nature of the letter suggests the readers of these three epistles were all intended as the same audience.
 - f. The purpose for which 2 John was written is addressing the same issues of itinerant false teachers presented in 1 John. John argues that offering these false teachers hospitality is harmful to the church because they are enemies of Christ. John is making the point that it is important to use discernment in accepting those who are “friends of Christ” and rejecting those who are “enemies of Christ.” These “false [iterant] teachers” whose teachings sounded reasonable, but were in fact leading many astray. It is logical from the historical context that John is fighting against these false teachers from his place of exile to keep his churches focused on the true Gospel of Christ.

- g. Please refer to the introductory and “author, date and purpose, and historical timeframe” sections of 1 John which apply to 2 and 3 John.

3. **STRUCTURAL OUTLINE AND INTERPRETATION** – because this letter is so brief, the outline and the interpretation will be combined together:

a. **Salutation – 1:1-3**

- i. 1:1a – designates the author.
- ii. 1:1b-d – designates the recipients.
- iii. 1:2 – reaffirms the priority of God’s Truth expressed by Jesus, which through the Spirit lives within and remains with His followers always.
- iv. 1:3 – Grace, mercy and peace are the result of the of the Truth and God’s Love in the life of the believer.

b. **Main body of the letter – 1:4-11**

i. 1:4-6 – God’s Truth in practice

1. Vs 4 – John makes a strong commendation for walking in Truth, and the result of hearing of the continued obedience of many in his congregation who are steadfast and true brings John great joy.
2. Vs 5-6 – the reference to “dear lady” is to a particular church congregation, rather than a person. This may be seen as a more literal approach to the church being the bride of Christ. John focuses again on love as the defining characteristic of all born again believers. Love transforms the individual, and through the transformed individual, God’s love can transform the world.

ii. **God’s Truth being protected – 1:7-11**

1. Vs 7 – the heresy of denying that Jesus is Messiah, meaning “God come to earth as a man in the flesh to redeem the world.” Denying this as true is the deceiving work of the anti-Christ. This problem is primarily spiritual and thus requires spiritual discernment.
2. Vs 8-9 – those who embrace this heresy are in fact defectors from the Church and are no longer true believers.
3. Vs 10-11 – these false teachers are infiltrating the church, and they are to be rejected and weeded out. Anyone that helps them spread their lies is actually in league with their wickedness, and will be judged accordingly.

iii. **John’s concluding thoughts – 1:12-13**

1. Vs 12 – John has much more to say to this church, and hopes to be able to do so in person so he may have the joy of seeing those who have endured and stayed true in person.
2. Vs 13 – the children of their “chosen sister” is no doubt a sister church through whom John had communicated his letter.

- 4. THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS – These false teachers are being supported by false leaders within the church. This combination of undisciplined organizational leaders and unscrupulous religious leaders has long been a problem for God’s people. Please refer to the next AD article on Bible Survey – Epistles – 5-7 – 3 John for a discussion of this problem and how leaders need to be vetted, trained, and held accountable.**