INTRODUCTION TO 2 JOHN

WALKING IN TRUTH AND LOVE

*Author, Date, and Place of Writing*

The author identifies himself as “The elder.” The style of writing and the contents of the letter are very similar to 1 John (see 1Jn 2:7,22-23; 3:11; 5:3). Since 1 John was written by Apostle John, it is most likely that he wrote 2 John as well--probably after writing 1 John from Ephesus sometime in the A.D. 90’s. (See the introduction to 1 John.)

*Recipients*

The letter is addressed to “the lady chosen by God and to her children.” The identity of the lady and her children is a question. The lady can refer to a specific woman and her children or it may be symbolic of a local church and its members. In either case, the way we understand and apply its teachings is unaffected. The intimate nature of this language suggests this church was very well known to John. While 1 John was circulated to churches in general, 2 John is of a more personal nature and addressed to a specific house church.

*Genre*

2 John is an epistle. Unlike 1 John, this letter follows the general convention for letters written in the first century A.D. with a greeting, body and closing.

*Occasion and Purpose*

John’s purpose in writing was to remind the church to walk in the truth and love. The “elect lady” was passionate about welcoming visitors. In those times, itinerant evangelists traveled among the churches to spread apostolic teachings. The New Testament canon was not yet settled and there was no Christian publishing house or online system at all. When itinerant evangelists traveled from place to place they depended on the hospitality of local churches. It was crucial that scattered house churches receive apostolic teachings. This is why the role of itinerant evangelists was so important. Many local churches were willing to receive and welcome itinerant evangelists and to provide hospitality. But false teachers took advantage of this Christian hospitality to infiltrate the church and promote heresies. So the believers needed to discern true gospel teachers from false teachers in practicing hospitality. Anyone who did not acknowledge that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh should not be received. Doing so would be participating in their wicked work. John warned them to watch out. For more on the historical background, see Introduction to 1 John.

*Main Theme*

The words “truth” and “love” are repeated throughout the letter (1[3], 3,4,5,6[2]). The author emphasized that the truth is not just a concept, but it lives in God’s people; the Truth is the person of Jesus Christ who has come in the flesh. Anyone who denies that Jesus Christ is the Son of God cannot have fellowship with the Father God. The Christian church must watch out, remain grounded in the truth, and defend the truth, while practicing the love of God.

*Purpose of our Study*

The purpose of our study is to practice loving one another in the Christian community. To do this, we must discern the truth from false teaching and defend the truth.

*Outline*

1. The Elder’s greeting to the elect lady (1-3)
   1. John and all who know “the truth” love you (1)
   2. The basis of love is “the truth” living in us (2)
   3. Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us (3)
2. Love one another (4-6)
   1. Great joy to find some walking in the truth (4)
   2. Love is to walk in obedience to his command (5-6)
3. Watch out for deceivers (7-11)
   1. Deceivers deny that Christ came in the flesh (7-8)
   2. Those who remain in the truth and those who do not (9)
   3. Do not receive false teachers (10-11)
4. Final Greetings (12-13)