

10. 2 John of a Verse by Verse Study of the Letters of John and Jude

The short letters of John—2 John and 3 John—were not as widely known in the early church as the 1 John. Their inclusion in the canon of scriptures rests mainly on the similarities between the language of 1 John and 2 John, especially in its discussion of love in 2 John 5-6:

5 And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. 6 And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

Compare this passage with 1 John 5:2-3:

2 This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. 3 This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.

The similarity of these and other verses clearly indicates that John was the author. Some scholars conclude that if 2 John were not written by John, it is a “purposeless piece of plagiarism.” (International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright © 1996, 2003, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

Introduction

2 John 1-3

1 *The elder,*

To the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in the truth – and not I only, but also all who know the truth – 2 because of the truth, which lives in us and will be with us forever:

3 *Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, will be with us in truth and love.*

John presents himself as *the elder*. This could mean either an older man or a man who holds the office of an elder in the church. Since John so designated himself in both 2 and 3 John, it would seem to mean an elder in the church. Peter called himself an elder in 1 Peter 5:1, “To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed.”

The *chosen lady* must be a local church which is implied in the word *chosen*. That he sends greetings from a chosen sister solidifies this interpretation in 2 John 13, “The children of your chosen sister send their greetings.” This church was loved by all those who knew the truth. The truth lives and abides in us—individuals and churches—forever.

Verse 3 connects grace, mercy, and peace from God and Jesus to the truth and love.

Echoes of 1 John

2 John 4-6

4 *It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us. 5 And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. 6 And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.*

2 John 4-6 presents a clear echo of 1 John and its teaching on love and truth. The chosen lady's children walked in truth. John made clear how Christians are to walk in 1 John 1:6-7 and 2:6

6 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one

another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

6 Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

When John says here that he is not writing a new commandment, the language and structure repeat that first written in 1 John 2:7-8:

7 Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. 8 Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

This commandment is that we love one another – that we walk in love. We must take this love to be a continuous way of life in which we walk with one another. Plato said, “Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle.” ...

Dealing with Deceivers

2 John 7-11

7 Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. 8 Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. 9 Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. 11 Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.

Verse 7 also, looks back to 1 John where John also identified those who denied Christ as the antichrist in 1 John 2:22-23:

22 Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist – he denies the Father and the Son. 23 No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

In verse 9, John instructs us how we are to deal with false teachers. First, we must recognize that they do not have God unless they have the teaching of Christ. Second, those who continue in the teaching have both the Father and the Son. Third, if someone comes without this teaching, do not ask them into your house or even welcome them. Fourth, if we welcome them, we share in their evil work. How, then, should we respond to those we bring error before us? Paul answers that question in 2 Tim 2:23-26:

23 Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. 24 And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. 25 Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

Conclusion

2 John 12-13

12 I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete.

13 The children of your chosen sister send their greetings.

John closes this letter by saying that he hopes to visit them and talk face to face. Verse 13 offers a greeting from a sister church.