

Handout: Second Letter of John

The most convincing argument in favor of the belief that John wrote this and the following letter is that the themes found in the First Letter recur whenever the opportunity presents itself.

Theophylact, Archbishop of Ohrid, *Commentary on 2 John*

Unlike the First Letter, the Second Letter has neither a Prologue nor an Epilogue, and divides into four parts:

- I. Greeting (verses 1-3)
- II. Walking in Truth and Love (verses 4-6)
- III. Avoiding False Teachers and their Doctrines (verses 7-11)
- IV. Benediction (verses 12-13)

The themes in Second John closely parallel First John concerning obedience to the command to love as a demonstration of Christian faith and the warning against false teachers.

Summary Outline of the Second Letter of St. John

BIBLICAL PERIOD	# 12 The Kingdom of the Church			
FOCUS	God's Commandments		False Teachers	
COVENANT	New and Eternal Covenant			
SCRIPTURE	1-----4-----7-----12-----13			
DIVISION	Greeting	Walking in Truth and Love	Avoiding False Teachers and Their Doctrines	Benediction
TOPIC	Obedience to God's Commandments		Beware of Counterfeit Commandments	
	Practice the Truth		Protect the Truth	
LOCATION	Ephesus (?)			
TIME	It was probably written in the mid-first-century AD after John wrote his Gospel and his First Letter but before the great Roman persecution that began in AD 64, resulting in John's imprisonment on Patmos. It was also probably written before the Jewish Revolt in AD 66 that led to the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in AD 70. The letter mentions none of those terrible events predicted by Jesus.			

1 The Presbyter [sumpresbuteros = chief elder] to the chosen Lady [eklekte kyria] and to her children whom I love in truth, and not only I but also all who know the truth

The identity of the sender and receiver of the letter were matters of controversy, but the majority opinion eventually decided that the “presbyter/elder” was St. John Zebedee (Jn 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7), and the “chosen/elect Lady” and her “children” were a church and her congregation. St. Paul, a Jewish-Christian, envisioned the universal Church as feminine and maternal that was also a Jewish tradition (Is 61:10-11; Jer 2:2; Ez 16:4-14; Eph 5:23; CCC 2040). “Presbyter” is from the Greek term *presbyteros*, meaning “older man” in charge of a clan or tribe. In the first century of the Christian Church, presbyter came to be the term for an ordained shepherd of a community (1 Pt 5:10 or a priest (Acts 14:23). St. Jerome wrote: “Originally presbyters and bishops were the same. When later on, one was chosen to preside over the rest, this was done to avoid schism. For apart from ordination, what function is there which belongs to a bishop which does not also belong to a presbyter?” (Jerome, *Letters*, 146).

4 I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth just as we were commanded by the Father. In the Old Testament and the New, “walking” with God means to be in fellowship with God by following His commandments just as walking with other gods referred to the sin of idol worship. For example see Dt 8:6, 19; 2 Jn 4; Rev 3:4).

Verse 7: The Greek word *antichristos*, means one who stands in opposition to the *Christos*, the Greek word for Messiah. It only appears five times in Scripture in 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3, 2 John 7, and in the plural in 1 John 2:18. In 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12, St. Paul describes this “lawless one” as an individual who will appear at the end of time to stand in opposition to God and His divine plan for humanity:

1. The lawless one desires to be revered and to receive the worship of humanity above the True God (verse 4).
2. At present, God restrains his appearance on the stage of human history until the appointed time when he will be revealed (verse 6).
3. The apostasy/rebellion of the lawless one is already at work (verse 7).
4. Satan is the origin of his power (verse 9).
5. God will reveal the lawless one, and Jesus will destroy him when He returns (verse 8).
6. The lawless one will deceive many (verse 11).
7. Those who believe the lawless one above God will be doomed to God’s divine judgment and condemnation (verse 12).

The one Antichrist who will appear at the end of human history and all antichrists that come before him are agents of Satan. Satan rules over the world of those immersed in sin and who deny Jesus is the Christ (Redeemer-Messiah). In his Gospel, St. John made three references to Satan using the title ruler/prince (Jn 12:31; 14:30; and 16:11). Jesus assured His disciples at the Last Supper that Satan had no power over Him (Jn 14:31). Satan did not have any power over Jesus in His humanity because Jesus is without sin. Sin in human beings is what empowers Satan, but Jesus came to do away with Satan’s power over humankind. St. John warns the faithful: *Whoever sins belongs to the devil because the devil has sinned from the beginning. Indeed, the Son of God was revealed to destroy the works of the devil* (1 Jn 3:8). The bad news is that sin will significantly increase on earth to facilitate the coming of the antichrist.

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