

2 John – Overview

Author: John the son of Zebedee, one of the 12 disciples. He referred to himself as “the elder” in 2 John and 3 John. John did not include his name in the Gospel of John or in 1, 2, 3 John. He did include his name in Revelation. Some think that there was a different person named John who was “the elder”. The content, vocabulary and style are persuasive in identifying the author of the book as the Apostle John.

When: The book was probably written in the early 90s (90-95 AD). 1 John was probably written after the Gospel of John. 2 John was probably written after 1 John. Each successive book appears to presume some knowledge of the previous books.

Where: No good evidence is given to indicate where the letter was written. Some say it was written from Ephesus, but there is no internal evidence for that.

Recipients: The letter was written to the elect lady and her children. ESV and NKJV have “elect lady and her children”. NASB has “chosen lady and her children”. NIV has “lady chosen by God and to her children”. NIV adds “by God” which is not part of the original text. Some have argued that the letter was sent to a lady named “Electa” or “Kuria” or to a nameless “dear lady”. Some take it as the church at large. The best option is to take “elect lady” as a local church and “her children” are the members of the church.

Purpose: John wrote to a local church to warn them about false teachers who had gone out to spread their lies to churches. These deceivers did not believe that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh. There were those who held to the belief that flesh was evil. Therefore they believed that Jesus could not have come in the flesh and be without sin. They had “gone on ahead” of the foundational teachings about Christ. I guess we could call them “Progressives”. John may have heard that the false teachers were headed to this church. John gave the church instructions on how to handle the unorthodox false teachers. John also reminded them to obey the command Jesus gave to the disciples on Maundy Thursday to love one another.