

## **2 John: Letter to the Chosen Lady**

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The book of Second John is unique in that it really only speaks to one subject. It is identified as a letter from the elder (by the style and tradition it is known to be John the Apostle) to the chosen lady and her children. The chosen lady is no doubt a local church, and her children are the members of that church. Such an image is not exclusive to the New Testament (seen again in Revelation 12), but was also used in the Old Testament by prophets pointing to the nation of Israel (their mother) and the individuals of Israel (Jeremiah 22:26, Isaiah 50:1, Hosea 2:2).

John's point begins with his call to the "New Commandment" of Love (John 13:4). What is interesting is that he defines loving one another as walking in the commandments of Christ. He then declares that there are those who do not walk in the commandments of Christ. He calls them antichrists, meaning they are opposed to Christ. Antichrist is John's term for those who were once Christian but turn away from the commandment and lead others astray; he describes them again in 1 John 2:22 and 4:1-3. Paul calls them "son of perdition" in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, and Peter calls them false teachers in 2 Peter 2:1-2.

How we are to behave towards these antichrists is the main point of John's letter. He states that to deny Christ is to walk in a way that transgresses the doctrine/teachings of Christ. The doctrine of Christ is in a broad sense the New Testament. Thus, any New Testament teaching is the doctrine which we are not to transgress (go too far). Our abiding in the doctrine is how we are identified as being in Christ.

John then goes on to say that if we receive one who does not walk in the doctrine of Christ, we are participating in their error. This is not a general statement; it refers to the ones called antichrist (i.e. false teachers). In this case a false teacher is one who brings another doctrine to teach. Many will come to the church either weak in knowledge (Romans 14:1) or even unbelieving (1 Corinthians 14:23). It is the one who has chosen to believe a false doctrine that we cannot receive. To receive them is to be a partaker in darkness (Ephesians 5:11).

John concludes by saying there are other things he wishes to say, but will meet them in person. This suggests that this brief message is the most important or most pressing point. We often see being diligent against false teaching as being "nit-picky" or being too hard on issues. However, it is clear from this brief letter that our refusal to associate with false teachers is a big deal.

We can make a number of applications on this passage. When someone comes to us today and has another doctrine than that of Christ, we cannot permit them to participate in our work. We cannot invite a preacher who teaches contrary to the doctrine of Christ on marriage and divorce (Matthew 19) or on the second coming of Christ (Matthew 25). We cannot permit one to come to us who teaches wrong on the work or structure of the church, which is part of the doctrine of Christ (1 Timothy 3:1-16, Ephesians 4:11-12). Even when they teach accurately in other things, our simply greeting them is participating in their error.