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2 John

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2 John

A. Overview and Summary.

1. This is the second of three epistles written by the Apostle John (see the overview for First John). This one and Third John are the shortest epistles in the New Testament. Both contain fewer than 300 Greek words and could have fit on a single sheet of papyrus. The date of writing is believed to be in the same time frame as John's other writings, or 90 to 95 AD. John refers to himself as "the elder" (1a), which reflects his age, his authority, and status as the last remaining apostle from the original twelve.
2. The theme of this epistle is the same as for First John. False teachers had arisen and were presenting doctrines that were damaging to the early church. This epistle is addressed "to the elect lady and her children" (1b), which means it is not a general epistle, but one sent to a house church or small group of Christians meeting together. He warns about "many deceivers who have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh" (7a).
3. John also provides instructions on being discerning in hospitality. He warns, "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds" (10-11).

B. Synopsis of the text.

1. It is not known who the "elect lady" is specifically or even her ethnic background. Still, as believers in Christ, she and her "elect sister" (13) are elect because, like all true believers, they were chosen before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4) to be part of Christ's church, His body. The "elect sister" apparently was a close friend of John's, as were the children of the elect sister (13), as he tells her they also sent their greetings.
2. John writes of love and truth, mentioning truth five times in the opening verses. Truth must be the foundation of love. Truth is the means by which love can be shown in Christian hospitality. John seems very harsh in his warning about not receiving one who teaches false doctrine (10-11). But he had the evil false teaching of Gnosticism in mind, which was threatening the early church. Apparently, false teachers were using the hospitality of believers to lure some away from the truth. Today, pleas for false Christian unity are something that we

need to guard against. Many once solid mainstream denominations are denying the truth in an attempt at unity.

3. Jesus has come in the flesh (7), meaning His incarnation, is a fundamental basis of the truth. That, along with the virgin birth, His deity, His substitutional atonement, His death, His resurrection, and His return, are the basic fundamental truths of the Christian faith. These truths we must uphold before love can truly be expressed.

C. Discussion Questions, Application and Passing it On.

1. Are you solidly grounded in Christian truth? Can you use Scripture to refute false teaching?
2. Do you think John was being too harsh? We need to express love in our relationships, but truth must be upheld. How would you address false teaching if it should come up in your church?

This New Testament survey was provided by Joshua Nations (JoshuaNations.org)