

2 John

- 1. What is the setting? What prompted John to write? (vs 2, 8)** This letter was written by John for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever. Truth is something that must continually be fought for and securely guarded. Winston Churchill once said about truth, "In wartime, truth is so precious it should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies." This statement sums up the world's willing perversion of truth in order to promote their own agenda. We must then have constant and eternal vigilance in guarding the truth -- see Proverbs 23:23, John 8:32. In line with writing this letter for the sake of the truth, John also wrote telling the Christians to "watch yourselves, that you might not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward" (vs 8). There was the deceiving doctrine of the antichrist (the gnostic heresy) that was designed, through a false justification of sin, to pull people away from the truth.
- 2. To whom is the letter addressed? (vs 1)** The letter is addressed to the chosen lady and her children. This is clearly talking about the church, as the church is continually described throughout the New Testament as a woman, specifically the bride of Christ – Galatians 4:26, Ephesians 5:22-32, Revelation chapter 12, Revelation 19:7-8, 21:1-2. The chosen lady seems to be a particular congregation (probably Ephesus) in which John had served as an elder – see vs 1, 13.
- 3. Is “antichrist” mentioned elsewhere? (vs 7)** The term "antichrist" is also mentioned in 1 John 2:18, 2:22, 4:3. These are the only other times in the Scriptures that "antichrist" is mentioned. Many people assume that antichrist is spoken of directly in the book of Revelation because of all the teaching out there that attempts to make the antichrist" the beast of Revelation 13 with the number 666.
- 4. Why would someone say that Jesus did not come in the flesh? (vs 7)** The doctrine that Jesus indeed became flesh is a foundational teaching throughout the entire Bible. The Old Testament made promises of a coming Messiah who would be of the physical lineage of Abraham (Genesis 22:18), and also of the seed of David (Psalm 89:3,4). Even more than that, there are multiple prophecies in the Old Testament of the incarnation of God (Micah 5:2, Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:6). Of course, this arrival of God in the flesh in the person of Jesus is confirmed throughout the entire New Testament (John 1:14, 1 Timothy 3:16). There are many reasons that a person may wish to deny Jesus' coming in the flesh. Some may want to dismiss Jesus in the flesh because they want to avoid their need for a Savior -- Matthew 1:21. Others prefer to worship a god of their own imagination rather than the God who revealed Himself clearly in Jesus -- John 8:42. Most so-called Christians subtly deny Jesus' incarnation because they want to excuse their lack of living like He did while on earth -- 1 Peter 2:21-22.
- 5. What “commandments” is John talking about? (vs 6)** The obvious commandment that consistently shows up in the gospel of John as well as his epistles is the commandment to love others the way that Christ has loved us -- John 13:34, 15:12; 1 John 4:21; 2 John 1:5. There are a couple of other commandments mentioned in 1 and 2 John as well -- 1 John 3:23 (believe in the name of Jesus Christ), 2 John 1:4 (walk in the

truth). A couple of other key verses in the New Testament that complete the picture for us are 1 Corinthians 14:37 (the things which I (apostle) write to you), 2 Peter 2:21 (the holy commandment (the way of Christianity)), 2 Peter 3:2 (that spoken by the apostles).

- 6. What was the major point of the letter to the original recipient?** The major point of the letter seems to be summed up in verse 8. John wanted these Christians to continue to press on for the truth in the midst of the building deception and pressure of gnosticism. This is a good lesson for all Christians -- keep moving forward for the sake of the truth. Be on guard! Watch yourselves! As Jesus told the Peter, James, and John in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." We don't want to, in a moment of weakness, lose everything that we have accomplished in our Christian walk. Every inch of ground we gain we have to fight for in this spiritual battle -- once we have gained ground, we will not give it back. We want to press on that we may receive the full reward of victory.
- 7. What can the modern Christian reader learn from this letter?** 1) We can learn that there is an inseparable connection between love and truth -- vs 1-3. Love doesn't rejoice with unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth -- 1 Corinthians 13:6. Also see Proverbs 3:3, Ephesians 4:15. 2) We can learn that true Christianity is walking in truth and real love -- vs 4-6. Christianity isn't based on pretense, but an absolute commitment to truth and to walk in accordance with the example that Jesus Christ left for us. This includes a sincere love of the brethren. 3) We need to resist and oppose false teachers -- vs 7-11. Whether it be opposing the overt gnosticism of John's day or any number of denominational falsehoods spread throughout our time, we must take a stand on the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. We don't want to add to or take away from God's perfect revelation. As the old saying goes, "The Bible only makes Christians only." We don't receive these false teachers as brethren; they are not our brothers in Christ, but are wolves in sheep's clothing. It is ok to study with them with the purpose of helping save their souls from death, but we will not willfully submit ourselves to their false teaching, nor pat them on the back as if they are servants of God. 4) We need to remember that we are in the same family of God as other congregations throughout the world who worship God in spirit and truth -- vs 13. There is a fellowship of the Spirit that is intended to be shared among all true Christians. We need to be willing to greet, encourage, share sorrow with, and rejoice with other congregations of Christ's church throughout the world.
- 8. Extra thoughts from the saints in Billings**