

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 9/2/09 Wednesday evening

New Testament Survey—2 John

Last week, in our survey of 1 John, we ran out of time as we were discussing the implications of the doctrine of assurance. We mentioned that in 1 John, we learn the following insights.

- a. A person can know and have assurance of salvation (5:11-13).
- b. I cannot give you assurance, nor is it my responsibility to do so. This is the task of the Holy Spirit (2:20; Rom. 8:16).
- c. The Holy Spirit uses His Word to give assurance (2:20-21, 27-28).
- d. John gives us a checklist of things that must be true in order for a person to have assurance of salvation [see other sheet].

Let's take a few moments to discuss a scenario that we presented last time. How would you use the book of 1 John to help the following individual...

Jane is a 40 year old mother of three who you met at Little League practice. According to her, she's been in church all her life. Her dad was a deacon, her mother a Sunday School teacher. She says she "prayed to receive Christ" when she was 6, but never really experienced the type of joy she saw in her parents. Now she tells you she's wondering if she's even a Christian...

The Book of 2 John...

To do: Scan the letter. Look for clues as to why this letter was written. Look for repeated words, and key themes.

- **Who wrote the book?**

--"The Elder" (1)

--The writer does not give his name. The contents of the letter indicate it was John, the apostle.

Note: Gromacki observes (377), "Because of its brevity and private character, the letter did not enjoy a wide circulation...However, these used and attributed it to the apostle John: Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Cyprian.

Trace the key events in John's life...

*followed Jesus for 3 years

*labored in Jerusalem during the early years of the church's existence (Acts 8:1; 15:2, 4; 16:4)

*went to Ephesus in Asia in about 65-70 A.D. where he served among the churches until 95 A.D.

(see map)

*then exiled to Patmos under persecution by Domitian

*returned to Ephesus in 97 A.D., and died there around 100 A.D.

Discuss: What are some potential reasons why John refers to himself as "The Elder" in this epistle (as opposed to using his name, or "The Apostle")?

Key: It seems to indicate a shift in authority in the local church. John was the last apostle. By this time the church no longer looked to the apostles for direction, but to the elders of the church. The term "elder" describes not simply age, but official position (Stott). The writer was known to his readers.

- **When was the book written?**

--between A.D. 85-95, about the same time as 1 John

Q: How is the recipient addressed in v 1? "The elect lady" (NIV "the chosen lady")

Who was she? We're not sure. Commentators are divided into two camps. Some say "the elect lady" refers to a person, and many have guessed who (eg--a lady named "Electa" which is the Greek word used; eg--a love letter from John?!; eg--Mary, the mother of our Lord). Others suggest "elect lady" is a figure of speech referring to an entire church, and "thy children" referring to the Christians in the church (note: switch from 2nd person singular "thy" in vv 4-5 to 2nd person plural "ye" in vv 6, 8, 10. This seems to indicate that John has in mind a church rather than an individual.

Discuss: Can you guess why John might use a "disguise" in writing to a church? Remember the setting. Persecution was a very real threat. Christians were hated.

- **Why was the book written?**

--John writes to correct a problem. Swindlers were taking advantage of Christian hospitality. Specifically, those who perverted true doctrine were taking advantage of the hospitality of church members.

Q: What key word appears 3 times in the first 2 verses? Truth

Q: What other words seem to hold a lot of weight in the letter? Love, children, walk, joy, deceivers, antichrist, doctrine, house

Q: Take a close look at v 10. What apparently was happening to the members of the church?

Key: History is key if we are to understand the Bible. The Bible was written in a historical setting. What was happening by the end of the 1st century A.D.? Pax Romana had made it possible for the gospel to spread throughout the Roman Empire by this time. There were churches all over.

Should Christians feed and house swindlers and false teachers who are motivated more by greed than creed (Stott, 202)? That's the key issue addressed in 2 John (and even in 3 John). Who do you welcome? Who do you refuse? And why? We'll find out in this letter.

- **What is the outline of the book?**

- I. Introduction (1-3)
- II. Issue #1: How are Christians to treat each other? (4-6)
 - A. We are to walk in truth (4).
 - B. We are to walk in love (5-6).
- III. Issue #2: How are Christians to treat deceivers? (7-11)
 - A. Realize they are there (7).
 - B. Be on guard (8-9).
 - C. Do not contribute to their work (10-11).
- IV. Conclusion (12-13)

- **What is the message of the book in one sentence?**

--2 John warns us not to help a religious teacher whose message doesn't agree with the truth of the Bible.

- **What contribution does the book make to biblical theology (that is, how does this book relate to the rest of the Bible)?**

1. *2 John shows us the importance of the truth.*

We see this in the first four verses of the letter.

- a. Christians love in the truth (1).
- b. Christians know the truth (1).
- c. Christians allow the truth to dwell in them (2).
- d. Christians walk in the truth (4).

Discuss: What does it mean to "walk in the truth"? To have every area of my life affected by the truth of God (my priorities, my attitudes, my use of time and money)

2. *2 John stresses the importance of biblical love.*

Q: How does John define love in verse 6? Walking in obedience to His commands. Let's think about the implications of this from two perspectives...

Discuss: Why is the following is a dangerous mentality, "We need more fellowship between churches today. We need to put more emphasis on love, and stop being so hung up on doctrine."? There can be no true fellowship in love when the truth is sacrificed.

Discuss: What is undermined when two Christians don't love each other? The truth of the gospel.

3. *2 John teaches us how to respond to cults.*

Q: According to verse 7, what was the mark of the false teacher?

Q: Acc. to verse 9, what else was true of the false teacher?

Please notice carefully. John doesn't tell us that they DENIED the incarnation, but merely that they didn't confess it. As Stott observes, "Perhaps they were subtle enough to counterfeit rather than contradict it."

eg--I read the following material of one cult, and was amazed at how many true things I read (emphasis on family values, morality, the Bible, etc). Yet the truth was subtly corrupted by dangerous error.

Don't miss this. The deceivers John had in mind would have called themselves "Christians." From their point of view, they were Christian missionaries, from John's, they were imposters (Stott, 211).

Q: What is our response to be to false teachers, acc. to verse 10?

Caution: Verse 10 is a critical, even somewhat controversial verse. Let's keep three things in mind (Stott):

1. John is referring to teachers of false doctrine, not merely to believers in it. What are the deceivers doing in v 10? Key word: "come to you"; This is NOT a casual visitor, but an official teacher. He not only believes false doctrine, but he is "bringing" false doctrine to you (like a salesperson who brings his goods to sell).

Q: Are we to cut ourselves off from people who believe false doctrine? Frankly, every non-Christian believes false doctrine!

2. John may not have in mind private hospitality, but an official church welcome. Where were the deceivers to be prohibited in v 10? "Into your house"

Q: Where did churches meet in John's day? In a house The issue may be this. John says, "If some false teachers comes to your house church, don't give him the pulpit."

3. John is referring to teachers of false doctrine about the incarnation, not to every false teacher. This isn't a verse we can use to bar the doors to someone who uses a different version of the Bible than we do. John's not talking about personal differences of opinion here (eg--"If you don't believe in the pre-trib rapture, I won't fellowship with you"). The issue is the Person and Work of Christ (His incarnation).