

OpenTheo

2 John



2 John - Steve Gregg

This Bible study covers the books of Philemon and Jude, which are personal letters addressing internal problems within the church. Though the author of 2 John is unknown, it is believed to be written by John the Apostle. The letter emphasizes the importance of love and obedience to God's commandments, while warning against false teachers and urging believers to uphold sound doctrine. John also offers guidance on the behavior of older women in the church and instructs believers not to extend hospitality to false teachers.

Transcript

We're going to do what we don't do with any other books of the Bible in this course, and that's to cover two books in one session. Those books are 2 and 3 John. We might divide them up for the tapes, but we're going to go through them both in this session.

They don't take very long. They are the shortest books in the Bible. I should say the shortest books in the New Testament.

They are one chapter each, and those are short chapters. There are two other New Testament books that are only one chapter each, but they're longer. In fact, almost twice as long as these.

If you put these two books together, there's only 27 verses. That's about the length of one chapter normally. The other two books that are one chapter each are Philemon and Jude, and they are like 25 verses, almost the same length as these two books together.

So covering them both is a little like covering one chapter, one book, but a little not like it, too, because they are actually different books, and as such, they have different audiences, different subject matter, and so forth. One thing they don't have different is the author. The author is the same person for both books, and the first of them, which is called 2 John, 2 John, is written to somebody that the author identifies as the elect lady.

The other book, 3 John, is addressed to a man named Gaius, and the subject matter of the books is different, too. 2 John addresses concerns and challenges the Church faced

from outsiders, outside teachers coming in with false teaching. We find, as we read 2 John, many of the same concerns and even some of the same sentences that we found in 1 John, and the concern in 2 John is teachers who deny that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, and we probably are safe in assuming we're talking about Gnostic teachers here, as in 1 John.

In the case of the book 3 John, entirely different concerns. It's not external teachers coming into the Church. It's problems with people who are already in the Church.

It's an internal problem with the Church. A leader named Diotrephes is trying to control the Church, and to the Church's detriment at that. Now, I don't believe it's right for any man to try to control the Church, but some men who try to do so might do so to the advantage of the Church in some respects, but this Diotrephes did not do so to the advantage of the Church.

He was actually opposed to John, if you can imagine that, opposed to the last surviving apostle, and when John sent messengers to the Church, Diotrephes put them out and wouldn't let the Church members entertain them. So this was a real problem from a man inside the Church, and John has to write to his friend Gaius about that problem, about that situation. So these are very short and very personal letters.

Both of them were written by John with in mind to just say a few words and hope to visit these recipients soon so that he could say much more in person and not commit it to writing. For example, you can see in 2 John verse 12 says, having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink, but I hope to come to you and speak face to face that our joy may be full. And likewise, 3 John verse 13, I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink, but I hope to see you shortly and we shall speak face to face.

These are almost identical closes. The letters are almost identical in length and they close this way, and it's actually been suggested perhaps the reason they're so identical in length and end up the way they do is that each letter occupied a normal sheet of papyrus or paper, as you would say, and that he got to the end of the sheet and rather than wanting to start a new sheet, he'd just say, I'll tell you the rest when I get there. He just kind of closed abruptly, but he said what needed to be said most.

And these are very personal letters. Many of Paul's letters are very personal too. Some of them less so, some of them are more businesslike, but these are very personal.

Now, the first of the, they both are addressed from the elder. That's what he calls himself. In Greek, it's the Presbuteros.

Now, Presbuteros is the word from which the word Presbyterian comes. And the reason churches, some churches are called Presbyterian is because they are ruled by

Presbuteros or in Greek would be Presbuteroi. And the word Presbuteros in Greek means an old man.

It's the generic term for an old man. The author is calling himself the old man or the elder. Now you may be aware that in the early church, they didn't have the same names for church leaders that we have in modern churches.

We have in our modern churches, we have someone called a pastor. Usually some churches have someone they call a priest. They didn't have either a man called a pastor or a man called a priest in any of the churches in the days of the apostles that we know of.

There's no record of it in the New Testament, but they did. When they had recognized church leaders, they called them elders, which again is the same word, old man, Presbuteros. We read, for example, in Acts chapter 14, that when Paul and Barnabas visited the churches of their first missionary journey on their second time through, they appointed elders in every church.

Paul wrote to Titus and told him to appoint elders in the church in every city. Timothy was given instructions concerning what the qualifications for elders would be. In a number of places, Paul uses the word elder, Presbuteros, interchangeably with the word episkopos.

You might recognize that the word episkopal or episkopalian comes from that Greek word. The word episkopos means an overseer. In Greek, the word epi means over or upon.

And skopos, we have a number of English words that have that as its root, telescope, microscope. Skopos means to see. Episkopos means to see over, oversee, to supervise.

Supervise would be more of a Latin version of the same word. Super means over and vise to see. So, a supervisor or an overseer was called an episkopos in the Greek.

In Paul's letters, he used, and also in Peter's, by the way, in 1 Peter chapter 5, the word episkopos, which means overseer, and the word presbuteros, meaning an old man, were used interchangeably. And so, the term presbyter in English and bishop in English, bishop came to be used, the English word for episkopos, for an overseer, became more common terms for these church leaders in later days. But we're talking about very early times.

Now, John may have been a very old man at this time. Traditionally, he wrote this very near the end of the first century. And since he was probably born early in the first century, there's a good chance he was close to 100 years old.

Traditionally, it is said that he lived to be that old. Therefore, he qualified as an old man

and called himself that. Now, some people think that when he says the elder, that he's referring to a presbyter, that is a church officer, somebody who held the role of eldership in the church.

Now, the fact that presbyteros does double duty, it's an ordinary word for an old man, but it also is the word that came to be used for certain church officers. They were elders. Makes it difficult to know.

And there's an old writing by a church father named Papias, who lived right around the turn of the first century, between the 100s and the 200s AD. Right at the time that century turned, Papias lived, and he knew some people who had known the apostles. And his writings, he wrote, I think he wrote six books, but they've all disappeared.

But in the fourth century, a church historian named Eusebius, a church historian, he wrote a book called Ecclesiastical History. I got this episcopal in my head, don't I? Ecclesiastical History, which means church history. In Greek, the word church is ecclesia, so ecclesiastic means church.

And Eusebius, who wrote the book Ecclesiastical History in the year 325, had surviving copies of Papias' work. They have perished since then, but Eusebius fortunately had them and quoted for them. So the reason we know what Papias said, on some points at least, is that there are fragments of his work preserved in the writings of Eusebius because he quotes him.

Now, Papias gave a list in one of his writings of the church leaders that he liked to consult or hear about when he was doing research about the origins of Christianity. He said, if I ever met anyone who had met any of the disciples, and he mentioned Peter and Andrew and James and John, he mentioned a bunch of the apostles, and then he mentioned some other people, including somebody he called the Presbyter John, or the Elder John. And the way he mentions him, after having already mentioned the Apostle John, suggests to many scholars, and I think reasonably enough, that there was another John, a well-known John, who was a Elder in the church, no doubt.

And so some have suggested that maybe these books were not written by the Apostle John, but by the Presbyter John. After all, he calls himself the Presbyter, the Elder. But I don't think it's likely.

And the reason is that there's good evidence that these books are written by the same person who wrote the Gospel of John and the First Epistle of John. The wording is so much the same in all those books. The phraseology, the concerns, the themes, the favorite vocabulary.

Anyone who reads the Gospel of John and these three epistles that bear John's name traditionally would say, it's the same author. Has to be the same author. If it's not, it's

somebody who copied the same author very, very well.

And so all the issues that go into deciding who's the author of the fourth gospel, is it John the Apostle or another John coming to play here? But although we did not study John's gospel here together at this school, when we do, and when I did in the past, I went through all the arguments and I believe there's good reason to accept the tradition of the church that it was the Apostle John who wrote the gospel. And if the gospel, then also the epistles would almost have to be. He would call himself the Elder then, not because that was his title, but that's because he was an old man.

As a matter of fact, Peter called himself an Elder in his first epistle. And he was obviously an Apostle. In 1 Peter 5, verse 1, Peter addressed those who are the elders of the church.

That is the ones who held the office of elder of the church. He said, the elders who are among you, I exhort. I, who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ.

Now he said, I'm a fellow elder. That doesn't mean he held a position of eldership in a church because he was an Apostle. An Apostle was definitely much more of an authoritative position than just a local church elder.

An Apostle oversees the whole church worldwide. But he still said he was an Elder. No doubt he was an old man.

He said, I can address you old men, you elders, because I'm an old man myself. And so Peter calls himself an Elder, though we know him to be an Apostle. There's no reason why John wouldn't call himself an Elder if he's an old man and an Apostle.

Even Paul in Philemon, writing to his friend Philemon in verse 9, refers to himself this way. Yet for love's sake, I rather appeal to you, being such a one as Paul the aged, Paul the old one. You see, when the Apostles were old, they often appealed to that fact.

Instead of calling themselves the Apostles, though they were the Apostles, they didn't so much pull rank as remind the people that they've been at this a long time. They've got a lot of experience. And that's kind of the right spirit.

You know, people don't pull rank in the church, even if you hold a rank. Paul, when he wrote to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 1, he said, as he was giving them instructions and even rebukes, he said in the last verse of 2 Corinthians 1, which is verse 24, not that we have dominion over your faith, but we're fellow workers for your joy, for by faith you stand. He said, we are Apostles, but we don't have dominion over you.

We're not trying to, you know, appeal to our titles all the time to get respect. However, we have experience. Now, the Elders in the churches probably were chosen for their experience, for their maturity.

And the term old man used to be not a put down. It used to be a flattery in the ancient world. An old man was considered to be probably a wise man.

And being old was in itself a mark of more credibility. So John calls himself the Elder, although he could call himself the Apostle. But instead of, you know, stating his rank as if he's, you know, trying to outrank somebody, he's just making the point that he's an old Christian statesman.

He's an old Christian experienced man appealing to younger Christians. And in the case of the Elect Lady, he certainly would probably be older than her, although we don't know who she is. In fact, when we come to John, we need to ask ourselves, who is the Elect Lady? We may not be able to get a good answer because we're not told.

There are some traditions that it might have even been Mary, the mother of Jesus. And the reason for that is that the Gospel of John tells us that when Jesus was on the cross and he looked down and saw his mother and John standing near each other at the foot of the cross, he assigned John to take care of her, his widow mother. And it actually says, from that day forward, Mary went home with John and he took care of her.

He was a generation younger than her. In fact, he was probably even younger than Jesus. But she was an older woman, a widow, and Jesus, being her oldest son, committed to her, wanted to make sure she would be cared for, and gave that assignment to John.

And we're told that John took care of her for the rest of her life. Therefore, it might be that John, if he was geographically removed from where she was at some point, would write her a letter and simply call her the Chosen Lady. That's what elect means, the Chosen Lady.

She certainly was chosen in a sense that no other lady was chosen to be the mother of Jesus. And so there is some theory that he might be writing to Mary. The main problem with this theory probably would be that if he's such an old man, Mary must be really, really old if she's living.

If John could be in his 90s, and Mary's a generation older, even if she had Jesus when she was quite young, she'd probably be 15 or 20 years older than John. And it seems very unlikely that this would be written during her lifetime. And therefore, the idea that she's the elect lady has some obstacles to overcome in that respect, chronologically.

Some have thought that Martha, the Martha in the Gospels might be the elect lady. She was certainly the lady of her house. She was the one who hosted Jesus and the disciples, including John on many occasions during Jesus' lifetime.

No doubt she stayed in very close contact with the church after Jesus was gone and the church was growing. John could have been very close to the family. He was when Jesus was alive.

And Martha's name means lady. The word Martha, it means lady. And so some think that he might be writing to her, even using a play on words on her name.

But apart from that fact, there's not much to commend the theory. It's strictly, I mean, there's any number of ladies that could receive a letter. And the fact that the name Martha means lady doesn't count for an awful lot for proving anything.

Now, it could be some other lady who's unknown to us. But another theory about the recipient of Second John is that it's not a lady at all, but a church. And that he is figuratively speaking of the church as a lady.

In favor of this is the view that throughout the New Testament, there are suggestions that the church is seen as the bride of Christ, as feminine. Paul spoke of the church as the mother of us all in Galatians chapter 4. In 1 Peter chapter 5, Peter spoke about a church that was in Babylon, sending greetings to the recipients of his letter. Peter apparently writing from there.

Now, many scholars believe Babylon was codenamed for Rome, and that Peter was actually writing from Rome, and that all the Christians knew that he meant Rome when he said Babylon. That may be. But in 1 Peter chapter 5, he says in verse 13, she who is in Babylon elect together with you, greets you, and so does Mark my son.

Now, notice Peter is sending greetings from the church that he is at to churches in other locations. And he says that they are elect, the churches that he's writing to are elect, and the church he's writing from is also elect together with them, and refers to the church as she. She who is in Babylon, elect together with you.

Now, consider that John not only speaks of his recipient in 2 John as an elect lady, but actually in the very last verse of 2 John, he says the children of your elect sister greet you. Now, if elect lady is a church, then her elect sister would be another church, the church where John is writing from. John spent his final years according to church tradition in Ephesus, and so the elect sister church that he's writing from and sending greetings from would possibly be the church of Ephesus.

And the children would be the members of the church. Remember, Paul said that the church is the mother of us all. Collectively, we are the church.

Individually, we're like children of the church. It's a shifting of the metaphor, but it's still not unusual. When Jesus wept over Jerusalem, he said, oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how many times I would have gathered your children under my wing as a chick gathers her chicks under her wing, but you would not.

He's speaking to Jerusalem collectively, and he speaks about the inhabitants as her children. It's simply a manner of speaking. John writes this letter to the elect lady and her children, and he sends greetings from her elect sister and her children.

The language certainly lends itself, especially in view of the way Peter closed his first epistle, to the idea that it was commonplace to refer to individual churches in this way as, you know, ladies with their children. And it would make it much more appropriate in a way. Some of the things that John says to the man to say to a church than to a lady, unless perhaps it was his girlfriend or his wife, because he does talk about the affection, the mutual affection between himself and this lady.

And of course, all Christians might have affection toward one another. Of course, it doesn't suggest anything, you know, romantic or sexual necessarily, but he talks as if there's, you know, a special appropriateness, even a command from God that they, he and the lady, love each other. Now, if he's talking about an actual lady, to say that God from the beginning commanded me to love you and you love me, I mean, that would have to be his wife or something.

But why would he write a letter to his wife instead of speaking to her in person? All things being equal, I think the theory that the elect lady is a church is most persuasive to me rather than an individual woman. And as we go through it verse by verse, I'll make points that convince me of that if I can. Now he says, the elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth, and not I only, but also all those who have known the truth.

That is, I'm not the only one who loves you, but all Christians love you and know you. Now again, it's much more likely that all the Christians would know a church than that all the Christians would know a particular woman, though it's not impossible, especially if the woman was Mary, the mother of Jesus. Certainly all the Christians in the world would know about her and love her if she was still living.

But in general, there probably weren't very many people in the church worldwide that all the church worldwide knew and loved. But a church, a notable church, could be the church in Rome, it could be a church in Jerusalem, in Antioch. One of the great churches would be known and loved by all Christians.

And he indicates that the recipient is well known and loved throughout the entire body of Christ worldwide because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever. Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. Now this is in some respects a fairly typical greeting, grace, mercy, and truth.

The pastoral epistles have the greeting in this form also. That's the first and second Timothy and Titus. Paul's more common greeting when he wrote letters was simply grace and peace be unto you.

But this was a little longer and when Paul wrote the pastoral epistles, he used a longer version, grace, mercy, and peace. It has been pointed out that grace, mercy, and peace

mark the order of succession from the first motion of God's heart toward us, grace, to the final outcome which is our peace. God has grace in him.

He shows mercy to us out of that grace and the result of receiving that mercy is that we have peace. And that may be intentional as it's listed that way. Now he says this grace, mercy, and peace comes from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, which is at one level simply the way that letters open.

I mean it's sort of a formality. But it's not a formality without meaning, obviously. It has meaning and that is that Christians, because they have received grace and mercy, have also peace from God.

And this peace comes from the Father and from Jesus. Lots of people think of it mostly as Jesus is the one who gives us peace. And lots of people think of the Father as perhaps not quite so well toward us.

The Father, the angry God, and Jesus, the nice God. But the biblical writers never entertained that notion at all. None of the biblical writers believe that God the Father is any different than Jesus.

That the grace that Jesus had is also the grace the Father had. In fact, the reason Jesus did is because the Father did. Jesus himself is simply a reflection of the Father.

Jesus said, if you've seen me, you've seen the Father. I and my Father are one. The Bible says God, that means the Father, so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

So the love of the Father is what is behind Jesus coming to earth and dying for us. And we saw that in 1 John a couple times. We have known and believed that the Father sent the Son to be the propitiation of the world.

And John also said in 1 John, here in his love, not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his only begotten Son that we might live through him. God the Father loves us. Jesus also loves us because the Father does.

But we sometimes want to give credit to Jesus for being the loving one and God the Father the somewhat more aloof, maybe a little more reluctant to think well of us or to be kind to us. Almost that Jesus had to persuade him to stop being angry at us. Some people think of that relationship that way.

But John, like the other apostles, indicates that grace and mercy and peace come from equally, both from the Father and from Jesus, the Son of the Father. This phrase, the Son of the Father, is not found anywhere else in the Greek New Testament. I don't know that that's important to note.

It's just a fact. You don't encounter this anywhere else. It's calling Jesus the Son of the

Father, that particular phrase.

And he said, in truth and love, that is, grace, mercy and peace will be yours in the realm of truth and in the realm of love. If you are staying in the truth and if you're walking in love, if you are in those two things, then grace, mercy and peace will continue to be with you, he says. He says in verse four, I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in the truth as we received commandment from the Father.

Now, some of her children, this could be an actual woman and her offspring. But again, I don't know, I guess it's sort of an intuitive thing to decide whether that sounds like members of a church or not. It sounds to me like some people from that church had visited the church where John was and he was pleased to see how faithful they were to the truth rather than drifting in a time when there were false teachers going about and churches were being perverted by them.

They were being seduced. First John, the first epistle of John, tells us that some had already gone out from them because of the seducers and there were teachers trying to deceive them, trying to rip them off from the faith. And they went out from us because they weren't others, he says in First John.

Well, some churches were obviously suffering some attrition from this attack of the enemy on the churches. But it was a refreshing thing for John when some from this church that he's writing to were encountered, whether they came to his church or he met them somewhere else. He said, I was very pleased when I met some of your kids, some of the representatives of your congregation is how I understand it, and saw how loyal they were to the truth.

He says, they were walking in truth as we received commandment from the Father. And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which I which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another. This is love that we walk according to his commandments.

This is his commandment. That as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it. Now, he's kind of mixing these two ideas together, that the commandment is love, and the love is to keep the commandments.

He says, it's not as though I wrote a new commandment. Remember in First John, he said, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which you have from the beginning. Then he modified it, and says, again, a new commandment I do write to you.

After all, Jesus called it a new commandment. This is in First John, chapter 2, verse 7 and 8. Verse 7 says, brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have from the beginning. In other words, I'm not telling you

anything novel.

False teachers always try to get your attention by telling you novel things you haven't heard before, because some people just have an itch for new stuff. By the way, that is a certain personality flaw in many Christians, is that they get bored with Jesus, and they want something new to tingle their innards. They want to hear some new doctrine, some new fulfilled prophecy in the last days, just something to keep them interested.

John said, I don't have anything new to tell you. It's not like I'm teaching you something new that you haven't heard before. I'm not even going to make that my goal.

On the other hand, it is a new commandment, because Jesus called it that. He says in First John, chapter 2, verse 8, again, a new commandment I write to you. I'll grant it, that it's newer than the Old Testament.

It's a new commandment Jesus gave, but it's not new to you. You've heard this from the beginning. So verse 5 here, he says, and now I plead with you, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we've had from the beginning, that we love one another.

It's really an old commandment. He says, this is love, verse 6, that we walk according to his commandments. And that means, see, there's a commandment, and there's commandments.

He said in verse 6, this is the commandment, singular. And he says, love is the commandment, and it's that we walk according to his commandments. Sounds like some double talk, but actually what he's saying is this.

God has given us one assignment, one commandment, love each other. Now, what does it look like to love each other? Well, keeping his commandments is what love looks like. You know, some people, when they read the Sermon on the Mount, I think they take it as a new sort of law or legalism.

I know groups that have read the Sermon on the Mount and just transformed it in so many written rules. This is how we're to behave in every situation. But really, a lot of the things in the Ten Commandments are somewhat hyperbole.

Like Jesus says, give to everyone who asks you. Well, you can't really do that. It wouldn't be right, in some cases, to give to some people who ask you, because there's other commandments in Scripture that says you shouldn't, you know, if someone won't work, they shouldn't eat, and things like that.

But what Jesus is doing in the Sermon on the Mount and in his teaching in general is not coming up with a new set of laws to replace the laws of Moses and to be applied in just as legalistic a way. He says the great commandment is simply to love one another, even

in the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 7, 12, he says, as you would that men should do to you, do the same to them likewise.

This is the whole law and the prophets. Now, doing what Jesus said will simply show that what you're doing is loving to your neighbor. We have our own cultural or sentimental ideas of what love may look like.

People, for example, will pamper their children and ruin them, spoil them, but it's because they feel like they love them. Well, that's a sentimental kind of a thing. And how do we know if we're really loving someone? Because we feel that we love them? Well, that's sometimes, sometimes we just love ourselves, and we're pampering them because we want them to remain on our side or whatever.

I mean, it's really not love of them. How do we know what love really looks like? Well, it looks like doing what Jesus said, forgiving people, turning the other cheek when they injure you, giving to those who are in need. These are very practical things that Jesus said to do.

And doing those things is what love looks like. Jesus taught us we should love each other, and they taught us what that looks like in various practical circumstances of life. When we encounter people, it means essentially doing to them what we would want someone doing to us in like circumstances.

He said, you do that, and that's all the law. And all the law is love your neighbors, you love yourself, he said elsewhere. So John is saying, love is this, that we walk in his commandments.

If you find yourself obeying the commandments of Jesus, naturally and happily, then it's because you love people. And that's what loving people looks like in your behavior. If you find that you're not keeping his commandments, you're not treating people like Jesus said, then it's simply an indication you don't love them.

So Jesus has shown us a picture of love, not only in his own actions, but also in his teaching. That's what his whole ministry was about, to make disciples people who love. Because the world, what it lacks more than anything else is genuine, unselfish, sacrificial love from man to man.

And so Jesus came and showed us what that looks like by laying down his life. In fact, he said, greater love has no man than this, that he laid down his life for his friends. So he demonstrated love, but he also described it in his teaching.

And John said that here. This is love that we walk according to his commandments. It's also, by the way, love for him.

If we obey his commandments, it's because we love him. Jesus said that in John 14, 15.

In John 14, 15, Jesus said, if you love me, keep my commandments.

So keeping his commandments, not only is the way to love others, it's a demonstration that we love him. If we know what he wants and we love him, we want to please him, so we'll keep his commandments. In the same chapter, in John 14, I think it's verse 23, he said, he that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me.

So Jesus indicated that keeping his commandments is the way to show that you really love him. And when you keep his commandments from the heart, you'll find that you're actually loving people, because that's what his commandments are, is loving behavior. That's what he tells us to do.

So John mixes this whole subject of love and commandments like they're intermixed, because they are. You can't keep his commandments without loving. You can't love him without keeping his commandments.

He's got all this mixed together. You need to remember one thing, and that is to love. If you don't know what that feels like or looks like, then see if you're keeping his other commandments, because that's what love looks like.

Now verse 7, for many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. And this, of course, is the only occurrence of the word antichrist in the Bible outside of the book of first John.

His statement here is pretty much the same as what he said in first John chapter 4, verses 1 through 6. He said, every spirit that doesn't confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God, and this is that spirit of the antichrist, of which you heard it was coming and now is in the world, he said in first John 4. And he says the same thing here. Those who say that Jesus doesn't come in the flesh, that person is a deceiver and an antichrist. Notice John believed there were multiple antichrists, and anyone who says such things is one of them is an antichrist.

Look to yourselves that we do not lose those things we work for. Notice yourselves, plural, as if he's writing to a group of people, not an individual. Now it could be argued, well, the plural applies to the woman and her children.

Seen as an individual woman and her actual kid writing to a family, yourselves would still be plural, speaking just to this woman and her offspring. But to my mind, there's a general sense here that he's writing to a group of people, which is a church. In fact, the word you throughout this epistle in the Greek sometimes is singular and sometimes plural.

And so it would be likely that when it's singular, he's addressing the church as a unit, as a lady. And when it's plural, he's addressing them with the mind that it is a bunch of individuals after all that make up this church. And so he seems to drift between singular

and plural in his way of speaking to them.

And here he uses certainly the plural. Look to yourselves that we, now some manuscripts say that you do not lose those things that we worked for, but that we, and again, some manuscripts say you, may receive a full reward. The suggestion here is that we've been working for something and what we've worked for is a full reward.

Someday we'll be rewarded for it, but we could lose it. If we're not careful, we could lose what we've worked for. We don't want to lose ground here.

And losing ground would apparently be by succumbing to the false teaching of these antichrists that he's warning against. Watch out for these teachers who are coming through denying Christ. You've gained a great deal.

You've gained ground. You've got a reward coming from God, but you could lose all that if you succumb to this false teaching. He said in verse nine, whoever transgresses, and some manuscripts, the ancient manuscripts actually say, the more ancient say, whoever goes ahead or goes beyond, goes too far and does not remain or abide in the doctrine of Christ, does not have God.

He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. Now this wording sounds very much like a number of statements in 1 John. Remember the word abide means remain or continue.

So he's talking about people who have been in the realm of correct doctrine of Christ, but they need to stay there. And whoever goes beyond that, from being in the correct doctrine, going beyond that to incorrect doctrine, that person does not have God. Now what doctrine are we talking about? The doctrine of Christ.

Remember the word doctrine is used differently in our modern mouths than it was used in the Bible. The word doctrine to us almost always rings the idea of theology, the doctrine of soteriology, the doctrine of eschatology, the doctrine of demonology, the doctrine of hermitology, that's the doctrine of sin and so forth. We have all these theological names for theological categories.

We call those doctrine. And all those things really boil down to ideas about truths out there. But there's also another kind of teaching doctrine, and that is teaching about how to live your life.

And Jesus' teaching, at least in the Synoptic Gospels, was primarily teaching about how to behave, how to live with God, how to be humble, how to forgive, those kinds of things. We don't read in the Synoptic Gospels not much at all of Jesus sitting down with his disciples and talking about eschatology or hermitology or soteriology or any of these conceptual theories. Now obviously he had theological ideas and they came across in his teaching, no doubt.

And sometimes the apostles in their later writings delved into these theological concepts more. But really the teaching of Christ, which is what John says you shouldn't go beyond, either means the teaching about Christ, which would be theological, or the teaching that Jesus taught. The term can mean the teaching of Christ could mean what Jesus taught, which is mostly practical and ethical.

Now I'm leaning toward John meaning the teachings that Jesus taught, although of course teaching about Jesus is important too, and John's concerned about that. In favor of it being theological teaching, he's just mentioned that some teachers have bad theology and need to watch out for that bad theology. They deny that Jesus came in the flesh.

That's a theological thing. So the teaching of Christ could be a reference to such teachings about Christ, about the nature of Christ and so forth. Yet he has been arguing before that, that we need to walk in his commandments and love one another, and that's his commandment, and we need to keep his commandments, and that's the teaching that Christ gave.

So when he says don't go beyond the teaching of Christ, don't neglect the teaching of Christ, whoever doesn't remain in the teaching of Christ, they don't have God. Does he mean the teachings about Christ or the teachings given by Christ? Either one is possible, and John of course would have concerns about both. But I'm thinking since the term probably means one or the other, I think he's probably meaning the teachings that Christ gave, which would include teachings about himself.

They'd be theological teachings about himself as well as practical, ethical teachings. But I say that because in 1st Timothy, Paul expresses the same concern and uses similar language but less ambiguous. In 1st Timothy, did I say second? 1st Timothy chapter 6, verse 3, Paul said, If anyone teaches otherwise, and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the teaching or doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but obsessed with disputes and arguments, etc., etc.

Now, notice he also is concerned about people who are not staying in the teaching of Jesus, but he specifically says the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, the things Jesus taught. And he refers to that as the doctrine or the teaching concerning godliness. That would be behavioral teaching.

He's concerned about teachers coming in and teaching antinomianism. He's concerned about teachers coming in and teaching that sin can be okay. No, you need to follow what Jesus taught.

And anyone who doesn't remain in what Jesus taught on these subjects and doesn't teach you to be godly is not of God. They don't know what they're talking about. And I

think that that would be John's concern too because the Gnostic teachers did teach antinomianism.

That is, ethical teaching that is wrong, not just conceptual teaching about who Jesus is and whether he came in the flesh or not. Both were concerns. But the word doctrine, I believe, if you look it up in all the occurrences in the New Testament, more often than not, I think you'll find that the word doctrine, which means teaching, is more often talking about ethical teaching.

And, for example, we know in the book of Acts that the early Christians sat daily under the apostles' doctrine, it says in Acts chapter 2, the apostles' teaching. Well, what was the doctrine they were teaching? We're not told what they were teaching in the church, but we have every reason to believe they were teaching exactly what Jesus told them to teach the church. And what was that? According to Matthew 28 verses 19 and 20, Jesus said, go and make disciples, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you.

That's no doubt what the apostles were teaching them. Jesus said, teach these people, disciple them by teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. That's ethical teachings, the ethical teachings that Christ gave.

So, as the apostles taught the church daily, although we're not told what the curriculum was, it's almost certain it was the curriculum that Jesus assigned them. They were teaching doctrine, and that doctrine is teaching disciples how to live. Look at Titus chapter 2. Titus chapter 2, verse 1, Paul's writing to a young church leader, Titus, and telling him how he should teach and how he should conduct the leadership of churches that he's overseeing.

And in Titus 2.1, Paul says, but as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine or sound teaching. Well, what is sound doctrine? He goes on and explains it. He doesn't mention the doctrine of the Trinity or the doctrine of this or that theological point.

He says, here's what becomes sound doctrine, that older men should be sober, reverent, self-controlled, that's what temperate means, sound in faith and love and patience. The older women likewise should be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things. That they, that is the older women, should admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemous.

Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded. Now, the old men, the young men, the old women, the young women, they all are given their own teaching about what? How they're to behave. That's sound doctrine.

In the New Testament, doctrine more often than not is a reference not to one's theological concepts, though that aspect is not absent. But the major teaching that was given was to obey Jesus. He's the Lord.

And Jesus commanded you to do this and that, and so we need to disciple people by teaching them to observe all things he's commanded. So when John says to the elect lady, whoever transgresses or goes beyond and does not remain in the teaching of Christ, it could be talking about these doctrines that he's not come in the flesh and so forth. But more often than not, in the Bible, I think this refers to the teaching that Christ gave, namely his teaching about love, loving one another.

And the leaders of the church need to be teaching that. And anyone who goes beyond and teaches contrary to the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ, Paul said in Timothy, 1 Timothy 6, 3, anyone who goes beyond and doesn't agree with the words of Jesus, he knows nothing, Paul said. All right, now verse 10, if anyone comes to and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house nor greet him.

This means don't show hospitality to false teachers. In the early church, teachers wandered around and spoke in churches. They came as guests.

I read for you the other night from the Didache, which was a manual of the early church about when some teacher comes to your church, if he asks for money, he's a false teacher. If he stays longer than three days, he's a false teacher. If he's in the spirit process, bring me a meal.

Well, he's not allowed to eat it if he does that. And if he eats it, he's a false teacher. I mean, it's kind of funny some of the ways that they defined this, but these probably, these instructions must have grown out of actual problems that arose with these teachers coming around.

Now, there's nothing wrong with the church showing hospitality to a teacher who's teaching them in exchange for his teaching. They house him and feed him. That's reasonable enough.

But you don't want to give that kind of hospitality to a teacher who's going to be corrupting the church with wrong doctrine. You don't take such a person like that into your house. Now, when he says, don't let them into your house, I don't think this means, and many Christians wonder if it means, you know, when the Jehovah's Witness comes to your door, should you invite them in to have a conversation? No.

Paul said, don't let them into your house. They bring the wrong doctrine. I don't, I mean, John said that.

That's not what John meant, I don't think. I don't think John's saying that you shouldn't let them in for a conversation. He's saying, don't let them in to house them.

Don't show them hospitality and house and feed them because then you are participating. You're encouraging, you're enabling them to carry their message and you're basically underwriting their ministry. He says, don't even greet them.

Now, greetings usually in the ancient world contained a wish of well-being of some kind, grace to you, peace to you. That was a typical greeting. And you don't want to wish good things on people who are going forward with false doctrines.

You don't want to invoke blessing on teachers that are damaging the church. So, don't even greet them that way. He says, whoever greets him shares in his evil deeds.

And by that, I believe he means you're encouraging him. You might even be invoking some kind of a grace upon him by your words. Because Christians, you never know what kind of thing goes on in the spiritual realm related to words.

But you know, when Jesus sent his disciples out two by two in Luke chapter 10, he said, when you go into a house that receives you, say, peace be on this house. Remember that? And he said, if it's a worthy house, your peace will rest on the house. And if it's not a worthy house, your peace will just come back to you.

It won't rest on the house. It's like, what? What's that about? You know, if I say peace to a house, that can actually make peace come on the house. But only if it's a worthy house.

If it's an unworthy house, it won't. There's more going on in the spiritual realm here through our words and our prayers and so forth than we really know. In the Old Testament, it was assumed that one man could bless another man and it would mean something.

It would actually have some effect. To curse somebody could drive them to distraction with fear of the thing that you cursed them with. It may, you know, may a plague be on both of your houses.

You know, that kind of a curse, it was thought that would carry some kind of possibility of a real curse coming. And we might say that's just superstitious. But how do we know it's superstitious? I mean, we're novices in the realm of spiritual things.

We really are. I mean, how much do we really know about the spiritual world and its mysteries? If Jesus said, you say peace to this house, and if it's a worthy house, your peace will come on that house. I'm going to figure Jesus isn't superstitious.

He knows more about this kind of stuff than I do. When John says, don't you bless these people, don't you greet these people with this kind of greeting because you're then becoming a supporter. You're then becoming someone who's partaking in their evil deeds.

They're going about an evil mission and you are encouraging that and maybe even bringing some kind of grace or peace upon it. I usually tell this story in connection with this because it was something that made an impression on me. I was, when I was young, in my 20s, and I often hitchhiked because I didn't have money or reliable cars.

I was hitchhiking in Santa Cruz once, and there was another hitchhiker, a girl that happened to be standing at the same corner that I was standing. She knew me because she had been at one of my Bible studies. I didn't know her, but she recognized me.

I think she was a brand new Christian. We were both hitchhiking. I didn't know her name or anything.

We weren't hitchhiking together, but we just happened to be hitchhiking in the same direction from that corner. A car stopped and picked us up and only went a few blocks and then said, this is where I'm turning. He hadn't let us off there.

In my customary way, I just said to him, God bless you, and I got out of the car. I said to the girl, I said, boy, that ride didn't count for much, did it? She said, well, maybe he just needed the blessing. Here I was the sophisticated Bible teacher.

She was a new Christian. It never occurred to me that when I say, God bless you, it might bless somebody. She just was really naive.

Oh, maybe God just wanted him to have that blessing. It never occurred to me that anything would happen like him being blessed by me saying, God bless you. It was just a tradition for me.

A little child, she'll lead them sometimes that God has hidden things from the wise and prudent that he's revealed to babes, Jesus said. Maybe she's right. Maybe when I say, God bless you, something's really going to happen that I'm not even expecting to happen.

When you greet someone and say, grace to you, peace to you, and the mission they're on is an evil mission. You're doing something, John said, don't do that. Don't do that because you become a partaker or share with them his evil deeds.

Paul said something like that in 1 Timothy 5 when he was talking to Timothy about ordaining people to be in the ministry. This was done through the laying on of hands. When they ordained somebody to release them into the ministry, the existing ministerial people would lay their hands on the newcomer or the one who's being commissioned.

This would suggest you're connected to us. You're an extension of our hands. What you do is with our authorization.

We're authorizing you. Therefore, what you do is like our hands are doing it. You're an

extension of us.

Paul was warning Timothy not to do this carelessly because if you make somebody an extension of you by ordaining them, what if they go wrong? Then you're involved in their wrongdoing. In 1 Timothy 5, verse 22, Paul instructs Timothy, do not lay hands on anyone hastily nor share in other people's sins. Now, those two things are connected.

If you hastily ordain somebody and they end up going out and doing bad things under your authorization, you are sharing with them in their sins. You might not think of it that way, but that's so. Paul's saying if you authorize it, you're responsible for it.

If you lay hands hastily, that is on someone who really is not well tested and perhaps may not continue in right behavior, you are sharing in their sins. John said if you greet that person in the particular way that people greeted people in those days, which would be wishing some kind of a good blessing on them, then you are partaking or sharing in the sins of this person. Then he closes the letter as we saw earlier, having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink, but I hope to come to you and speak face to face that our joy may be full.

The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen. So it's a very short letter, really less than 12 verses of actual instruction of any kind.

Mostly just saying watch out for false teachers. The ones I have in mind are those who deny that Jesus Christ has come to the flesh. They also happen to be anti-gnomian and they would suggest you don't have to keep the commandments of Christ, but I'm saying you do need to walk in his commandments.

Walking in love is going to be walking in his commandments and you need to do that and don't countenance or even encourage or even greet or show hospitality to any teacher who comes to undermine the truth of these matters and to substitute in the church such false teaching. So John's writing to this elect lady or church in order to inoculate the church from the danger of infection with these false things from outside.