

The Johannine Epistles: 2 John – Notes to a Trusted Church

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Abstract

In this lecture, Dr. Robert Yarbrough examines 2 John as a series of notes to a trusted church, emphasizing a hermeneutical method of seeing the original context before applying its truths. He outlines how the greeting conveys ecclesial solidarity and pastoral optimism, while the core of the letter balances the triad of truth, commandments, and love. Yarbrough also addresses the warning against deceivers who offer a defective representation of Jesus Christ and stray from apostolic teaching. Ultimately, he highlights the promise of full reward and complete joy for believers who remain steadfast in Christ.

Outline

I. Introduction and Method of Interpretation (Passages 1–4)

- A. Overview of 2 John: "Notes to a Trusted Church"
- B. Hermeneutical Method: "Seeing" before "Saying"
 - 1. Step 1: "See" – Observing historical, grammatical, and original context ("then and there").
 - 2. Step 2: "Say" – Stating faithful conclusions and contemporary application ("here and now").
- C. Structural Breakdown of 2 John: Greeting, Joy and Concern, Warning, Farewell.

II. Greeting: John's Love in Truth (Verses 1–3)

- A. Author and Recipients (v. 1a)
 - 1. Author: The Elder (John the son of Zebedee; cf. 1 Pet 5:1).
 - 2. Recipients: The "elect lady" (a local congregation) and her "children" (church members).
- B. Truth and Ecclesial Solidarity (vv. 1b–3)
 - 1. Common ground among all believers who know the truth.
 - 2. Connection to Pauline ecclesiology (Ephesians 4:1–6) – one body, one Spirit, one Lord.
- C. Pastoral Optimism (v. 3)
 - 1. Promise of grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Jesus Christ.
 - 2. Grounded in God's historical faithfulness amidst trial and trauma.

III. Joy and Concern: Living the Triad and Facing Deceivers (Verses 4–8)

- A. The Christian Triad: Truth, Commandments, and Love (vv. 4–6)

1. Truth: Content of the mind and body of doctrine regarding Christ.
2. Commandments: Ethics, behavior, and daily Christian walk.
3. Love: Interpersonal devotion and disposition of the heart.

B. Old Testament Continuity

1. Reconceiving Old Testament godliness in light of Christ's fulfillment.
2. Great love commands rooted in Old Testament law.

C. Warning Against Deceivers and Antichrist (v. 7)

1. Defective representation of Jesus Christ coming in the flesh.
2. Meaning of "deceiver" (greek cognate to planet/wandering, unstable) vs. stability of Christ.
3. Influence of the antichrist/adversary.

D. Call to Vigilance and Full Reward (v. 8)

1. Preserving the legacy of apostolic and pastoral labor.
2. Valuing labor as a reflection of Jewish-Christian heritage.
3. Personal illustration: Persevering through sudden hardship (the storm/tree illustration).

IV. Warning: Abiding in the Teaching of Christ (Verses 9–11)

A. Danger of "Going Ahead" (v. 9)

1. Straying outside the domain of Christ's teaching leads to forfeiting fellowship with God.
2. Abiding in the teaching ensures fellowship with both Father and Son.

B. Instructions on Hospitality and Greeting (vv. 10–11)

1. Refusing to host or endorse false itinerant teachers/deceivers.
2. Distinguishing false teachers from general Christian hospitality and neighborly care.

V. Farewell: Complete Joy (Verses 12–13)

A. Desire for Face-to-Face Fellowship (v. 12)

1. Preference for personal presence over paper and ink.
2. Shared greeting from sister church ("children of your elect sister").

B. Theme of Fullness/Completeness of Joy

1. Echoing John the Baptist (John 3:29–30) and Upper Room Discourse (John 15:11; 16:20–24).
2. Joy arising from labor and abiding in Christ despite temporary sorrow and trials.