

II JOHN: EXCLUDING APOSTATES FROM THE CHURCH

I. Identifying Apostates For Exclusion From The Church

(2 John 1-7)

I. Introduction

- A. Having written about true spiritual fellowship in 1 John, the Apostle John wrote a second epistle on the danger of apostates who spiritually stood to harm the Church were they not to be excluded from its fellowship!
- B. 2 John 1-7 clarified what an apostate was that believers could discern whom to exclude from their fellowship:

II. Identifying Apostates For Exclusion From The Church, 2 John 1-7.

- A. I believe that 2 John was written to a church that John figuratively called "the elect lady," with "her children" being that church's members (2 John 1), for he "drops the singular number for his pronouns after verse 5 and uses the singular again only in verse 13." (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 905) The reason for this unusual use of terms may be that the letter was written in the early 60s (Ibid.) when opposition to Christians was rising only to explode under Nero in A. D. 64 (Z. P. E. B., vol. Four, p. 410-411), so John may have sought to avoid exposing the identity of his readers to persecution were the authorities ever to intercept his letter.
- B. John's then taking the risk to write such a letter in such a perilous time reveals his great concern to address the issue at hand of the grave threat of apostates who worked to undermine the faith of his readers (as follows):
 - 1. The introduction of the epistle in 2 John 1-3 repeatedly emphasized the truth where John complemented his readers for their love of God's truth which dwells in us believers and will be with us forever.
 - 2. John then commended his readers upon learning that they were ordering their lives after the truth just as we believers have received a commandment to do so from God the Father, 2 John 4.
 - 3. Wherefore, John exhorted the church to heed an old commandment he had given that they love one another, a love that was defined not as a mere expression of emotion, but as an objective walk in obedience to God's commands, 2 John 5-6.
 - 4. The reason John emphasized that true spiritual love is marked by objective obedience to God's Word is given in 2 John 7, for John connects verse 7 to verse 6 by the conjunction *hoti* that here means "because" to explain his statement in verse 6, Ibid., B. K. C., N. T., p. 907. Thus, John's reason in clarifying that love involved objective obedience to God's Word was that many deceivers had gone out into the world and were not objectively confessing as their belief (*homologountes*, present active participle of *homologeō*, "profess, confess," U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 827; The Analyt. Grk. Lex., 1972, p. 288) that Jesus "is coming" (*erchomenon*, present participle of *erchomai*, "to come," Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., The Analyt. Grk. Lex., p. 167) in the flesh, 2 John 7a. This deception was great for several reasons:
 - a. Though some false teachers might volunteer the news that they denied the Incarnation of Christ, some deceivers may not have readily volunteered such information, but simply did not confess any belief in the Incarnation that they might make inroads into the Church. The only way a believer could discern some of these deceivers was to test them to discern their actual belief relative to the Incarnation.
 - b. Second, the present tense of the participle "is coming" (*homologountes*) "seems to include the past coming of Christ in the flesh at the incarnation, the present continuance of His risen humanity, as well as His future coming to earth," Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to 2 John 7. John thus meant to counter all the false views of the Incarnation of Christ, for (i) some taught that "Jesus' body was not truly human; it only appeared that way" as in the heresy of "Docetism" (Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T.; Ibid., p. 881) and (ii) Cerinthus taught that "Jesus was only a man and that the divine Christ descended on Jesus at His baptism and left Him before the Crucifixion," Ibid.
 - 5. John thus stated by his "is coming" participle that *any denial* of the **permanent, bodily, full** incarnation of Jesus Christ as God come in the flesh was a denial not only by a deceiver, but by an antichrist, 2 John 7b.

Lesson: *The apostates about whom John wrote to alert believers deceptively held to but did not necessarily volunteer to state as their belief that Jesus was either not always or not fully God come in the flesh, and any such denial of the Incarnation undermined Christ's identity as both God and man, undermining faith in Him! (John 20:31) Thus, John wrote 2 John under threatening circumstances of persecution to warn believers about such deceivers and antichrists lest their faith be undermined to their loss of eventual personal reward, cf. 2 John 8b.*

Application: *(1) May we hold firmly to the permanent, bodily, full incarnation of Christ. (2) May we test all the spirits on this matter, for many false prophets and teachers are gone out into the world. (cf. 1 John 4:1)*