

II JOHN: EXCLUDING APOSTATES FROM THE CHURCH

II. Excluding Apostates From Our Fellowship

(2 John 8-13)

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 excluded from its fellowship!
- B. 2 John 8-13 taught how we are to exclude apostates from our fellowship, what we view for our edification:

II. Excluding Apostates From Our Fellowship, 2 John 8-13.

- A. Having identified an apostate in 2 John 1-7 as one who makes any denial as to the permanent, bodily, full incarnation of the fully divine and fully human Lord Jesus Christ, the Apostle John in 2 John 8-13 clarified the practice of excluding such an apostate from our fellowship.
- B. The details of that exclusion are clarified in 2 John 8-11, and we view the passage to understand what that exclusion entails and *why* such exclusion is necessary (as follows):
 - 1. John explained that there is a lot to lose as well as a lot to gain by properly dealing with apostates, v. 8:
 - a. The phrase "Look to yourselves" (KJV) means "Beware [for] yourselves," the Greek verb *blepo* ("look") being used idiomatically, 2 John 8a; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 142-143.
 - b. That for which we must beware for ourselves is the danger of "losing" (*apolesete*, aorist subjunctive active from *apollumi*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 828; The Analyt. Grk. Lex. (Zon.), 1972, p. 44) what we believers have "accomplished" (*eirgasasthe*, aorist active indicative of *ergazomai*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., The Analyt. Grk. Lex., p. 118; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 306-307), and in the context, the accomplishment of the affirmation as a local church body of the doctrine of the permanent, bodily, full incarnation of the fully divine and fully human Lord Jesus Christ! (2 John 8b)
 - c. Losing any part of this doctrinal claim due to the influence of an apostate will cause a corresponding loss of God's "complete, full" (*pleres*, Ibid., p. 675-676) "reward" (*misthos*, Ibid., p. 525), 2 John 8c.
 - 2. Furthermore, for anyone who "goes ahead, goes too far" (*proago*, Ibid., p. 708-709) and does not "remain" (*meno*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.) -- John's typical term for spiritual "fellowship" -- in the teaching of the Messiah [Incarnation] in some way or to some degree, he does not have God where he who remains in this doctrine has both the Father and the Son, 2 John 9. John here did not suggest that one's salvation status is based on whether he holds to this doctrine, but that even if a **believer** departs from this doctrine by being deceived, he departs from experiential fellowship with God where holding to the doctrine is compatible with fellowship with God the Father and God the Son. (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 907-908)
 - 3. Since God Himself highly desires that His people firmly hold to the full Incarnation of Christ in fellowship with Him, the local church cannot afford to risk letting **anyone** -- believer or unbeliever -- who rejects belief in **any part** of that doctrine influence the rest of the body, so severe steps must be taken, v. 10-11:
 - a. If any "traveling philosopher or religious teacher . . . a familiar phenomenon," were to come unto the local church, relying on it for financial support and hospitality (Ibid., p. 908) but he did not bring this doctrine of the full Incarnation of Christ, the local church was not to give him hospitality or even give him a typical cordial address (the Greek term is *Chairein* used in a welcome or a farewell, Ibid.), 2 John 10.
 - b. Anyone who even gives such a cordial welcome or farewell address fellowships in the wrongdoer's evil works because he encourages the wrongdoer in his belief and way of life, 2 John 11.
 - c. Opposite today's high tolerance for religious differences, the apostles were committed to the truth, aware of the dangers of religious error, so they resolutely denounced false teachers and false teachings, Ibid.
- C. The Apostle John closed his epistle, explaining that he had much to write to his readers, but that he preferred to communicate face-to-face with them instead of writing by letter, that his joy might be complete, 2 John 12.
- D. In closing, John "gave farewell greetings from the children of your chosen sister," and if this letter were to a woman, we would expect the greetings to come from her sister, not her children, Ibid., p. 909. This is another reason to think John was writing covertly to a church with its members, testifying to the "network of Christian interest and concern which united the members of different churches in the earliest years of the faith," Ibid.

Lesson: *God so strongly desires His people to hold firmly to the full Incarnation of Christ for full fellowship with Him and for full reward that we must have no fellowship whatsoever with anyone who denies that doctrine.*

Application: *May we practice "first degree" separation from apostates who deny the full Incarnation of Christ.*