

GEMS FROM THE ENDINGS OF THE EPISTLES
Part X: Gems From The Ending Of 2 John, Early A. D. 60s
(2 John 1-13)

I. Introduction

- A. The epistle of 2 John according to internal style and content was written by the Apostle John from Ephesus as was 1 John sometime in the early A. D. 60s (Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 434, 905).
- B. This letter was short enough to have been penned on one sheet of papyrus of standard size (Ibid., p. 905), but its important call for a church to adhere to the doctrine of Christ's Incarnation versus Gnostic heresy and how to respond to those who deny this belief (v. 7-11) readily earned it a place in the Scripture canon, Ibid.
- C. Just as important as John's defense of the Incarnation is his claim that the initial Christian doctrines from the apostles were set, never to be changed (cf. v. 2, 6, 9), a claim with great applications for today's evangelicals.
- D. We thus view 2 John 1-13 for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

II. Gems From The Ending Of 2 John, Early A. D. 60s; 2 John 1-13.

- A. John's address to "the elect lady and her children" (2 John 1) is not to a mother and her children, for "in the Greek the writer drops the singular number for his pronouns after verse 5 and uses a singular again only in verse 13," Ibid. Then, in the closing, John sent greetings from the children of the elect lady's sister, and "(i)f this letter were written to an actual Christian woman, one would expect the greetings to come from her sister, not from her sister's children," Ibid., p. 909. We conclude that the "lady" in this epistle is a local church, and the "children" were individual believers in that church. [John may have cloaked his address this way due to pressing threats of persecution in case the letter was intercepted by hostile authorities.]
- B. The epistle opens with a repeat emphasis on the truth (2 John 1-4), so John's burden was to uphold the truth.
- C. He then reminded his readers of the original commandment that they had received, that they love one another, 2 John 5-6. "As in the larger epistle" of 1 John, "the apostle encouraged his readers to follow the old ways as he sought to help them resist the innovations of the antichrists (2 John 7)," Ibid., p. 906.
- D. The significant truth John meant to address is the truth of the Incarnation of Christ, 2 John 7 (as follows):
 - 1. John asserted that many deceivers had gone out into the world who did not acknowledge Jesus Christ "as coming in the flesh" according to 2 John 7a NIV; Ibid., p. 907.
 - 2. The present participle "coming" in this phrase "focuses on the principle involved in the Incarnation: Jesus taking on (coming in) and continuing with a human nature (cf. 1 John 4:2). This truth about 'Jesus Christ . . . coming in the flesh' is what the deceivers denied. Some taught that Jesus' body was not truly human; it only appeared that way. That, of course, contradicted the truth of the Incarnation, that Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully human (Col. 2:9)," Ibid.
 - 3. "Such a denial marks that person as a deceiver as well as an antichrist," 2 John 7b; Ibid.
- E. Believers who face deceivers who deny Christ's Incarnation must protect themselves from compromising with such errant doctrine and its promoters lest they lose their reward from the Lord, 2 John 2:8.
- F. John added that if anyone "runs ahead" (*proagon*, Ibid.; U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 828) and does not stay in the teaching of Christ's Incarnation does not have God, 2 John 9. [Note how John opposed any move away from the original truth to a new or a revised version of belief attained by "running ahead" of the initial belief! This teaching greatly applies to us today: in 1996, fourteen theologically conservative evangelical leaders and scholars in the book, The Coming Evangelical Crisis, edited by John H. Armstrong, warned that "(b)oth the sufficiency of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:14-17 and the authoritative finality of Christ's gospel as the 'power of God for salvation' (Rom. 1:16)" were "being undermined" even in some evangelical circles. (p. 18 et al.)]
- G. Believers were to have nothing to do with apostates who came teaching a denial of Christ's Incarnation. They were not to invite them into their homes nor wish them well lest they share in their evil deeds, 2 John 10-11!
- H. John then closed his short epistle, noting that he had many things to write to his readers, but that he trusted he would visit them shortly and speak face to face with them for their edification, 2 John 12-13.

Lesson: *The initial Christian doctrines we received of the apostles of Christ are to be upheld without change, and the doctrine of Christ's Incarnation must be upheld to such an extent that we believers are to practice "first degree separation" from apostates who come promoting a rejection of that truth. Such separation involves not only avoiding fellowship with such apostates, but also not allowing them into our homes or wishing them well.*

Application: *May we hold firmly to the initial truths of Christ's apostles, and may we heed first degree separation.*