

Introduction to 2 John

Where is it in the Bible?

Second John is the twenty-fourth book in the New Testament and comes between 1 John and 3 John. It is the one of the Johannine Epistles, which have much in common with each other and with the Gospel according to John. Like the Pauline epistles, these letters were arranged in the New Testament according to their length, from longest to shortest. The order does not indicate anything about order of composition.

Who wrote it?

The first verse of 2 John says that the author is “the elder”. This person is often identified with the apostle John. There is also a possibility that he was another member of the community. “A popular theory holds that the letters may have been written by a person known ... from church history as 'John the Elder.' According to Eusebius, John the Elder was a disciple of the apostle John and was a member of his congregation. He may be the 'elder' responsible for 2 John and 3 John; he may also have been the author of 1 John and one of the final authors/editors of John's Gospel.”¹

When was it written?

This letter was probably composed in the 90s, around the same time or shortly after the Gospel according to John. Some scholars think it was written before 1 John.

What is it about?

Second John urges the leader of a house church and its members (“the elect lady and her children” in v. 1) to avoid false teaching and continue to walk in truth and love.

How is it structured?

- I. Salutation and Greeting (1-3)
- II. Reason for Writing (4-11)
- III. Final Greetings (12-13)

What are some things to look for?

- **False teachers:** It is not clear what the false teachers were saying, but they are probably the same ones opposed in 1 John. They seem to have appeared recently, and the author urged the readers not to welcome them into the church since they did not “abide in the teaching of Christ.” The fact the the false teachers seem to be new to the community is one reason scholars feel this letter was written before 1 John, where the false teachers seem to have left (1 John 2:19).
- **Similarities with 1 John:** Like 1 John, this letter stresses the humanity of Jesus and the importance of loving one another.

¹ Mark Allan Powell, *Introducing the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 495-496.