

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

## 2 JOHN

### THEME

#### Author and Title

Ancient manuscripts uniformly identify this as a second letter by “John.” Due to the writing style, position in the Canon, and theological outlook, it is best viewed as written by the apostle John (see [Introduction to 1 John: Author and Title](#)). The document itself identifies its author as “the elder” ([v. 1](#)). Theories that this was some “elder John” different from the apostle are interesting but lack compelling support. “Elder” was a common term for pastoral leaders of local congregations in the early church. In calling himself “the elder,” John is simply affirming his pastoral role, as Peter also does (“fellow elder,” [1 Pet. 5:1](#)), not somehow disqualifying himself from being identified as Jesus’ disciple and ultimately an apostle. (See also [Introduction to 3 John: Author and Title](#).)

#### Date

Like 1 John, 2 John probably was written in the vicinity of Ephesus near the end of the first century A.D. Ancient sources suggest John spent the closing decades of his life in this area, ministering to churches like those listed in [Revelation 2–3](#).

#### Recipients

John writes to “the elect lady.” This more likely refers to a congregation than to an individual, because much of 2 John is written in the second-person plural. It is also questionable whether John would write to a female Christian that he and she should “love one another” ([v. 5](#)); the phrase makes better sense if addressed to a church. There are three additional reasons why “elect lady” may refer to a whole congregation. First, the word “church” in Greek is feminine in gender, and “lady” would go along with that. Second, the church is depicted as “bride” elsewhere in John’s writings ([Rev. 21:2, 9; 22:17](#)). Third, the Greek word *kyria* (“lady”) referred to a social subunit in the Greek city-state. John may use this word for a local congregation instead of the more common feminine word *ekklēsia*.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics

[Verse 13](#) of 2 John suggests that John writes to one congregation from another, which he terms “your elect sister.”

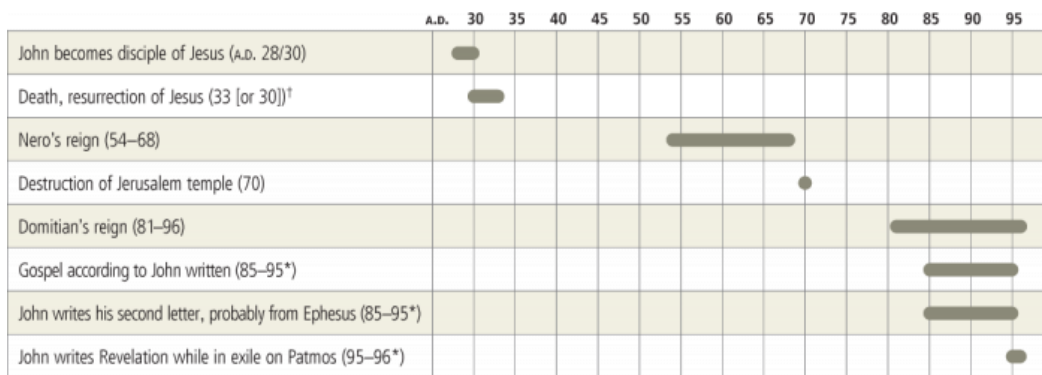
## Theme

The focus of 2 John is living in the love of God in accordance with the truth of Jesus Christ. This love extends not only to God but to other people. It is also discerning; it does not “go on ahead” of biblical revelation ([v. 9](#)), and it does not lend aid to enemies of the gospel message ([vv. 10–11](#)). Instead, Christ’s followers “walk according to his commandments” ([v. 6](#)) and through faith “win a full reward” ([v. 8](#)).

## Purpose, Occasion, and Background

John writes to urge readers to love each other ([v. 5](#)) and beware of deceivers ([vv. 7–8](#)). He offers practical counsel on showing hospitality to traveling missionaries ([vv. 10–11](#)) and seeks to prepare “the elect lady” for his anticipated visit in the near future ([v. 12](#)).

## Timeline



\* denotes approximate date; † signifies either/or; ‡ see *The Date of Jesus' Crucifixion*, pp. 1809–1810

## Key Themes

1. The truth of Jesus Christ is eternal.	<a href="#">2</a>
2. Christian love and compliance with God’s commandments are inseparable.	<a href="#">6</a>
3. False teaching about Christ abounds.	<a href="#">7</a>
4. Purveyors of false teaching have to be identified and left to their own devices, not welcomed and supported by upholders of authentic Christian teaching.	<a href="#">9–11</a>

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

## History of Salvation Summary

Now that Christ has accomplished salvation, believers are to follow him and his teaching. (For an explanation of the “History of Salvation,” see the [Overview of the Bible](#).)

3

## Literary Features

In format, this brief book is a conventional NT epistle, consisting of a salutation, a body, and a conclusion. As in most epistles, the body of the letter consists of mingled instruction and commands, and although readers do not find the concentrated list of commands that comprise the familiar *paraenesis* (set of ethical commands) of NT letters, [verses 8–11](#) have affinities with that conventional motif.

## Outline

- I. Greeting: The Elder’s Love (vv. [1–3](#))
- II. The Elder’s Joy and Request (vv. [4–6](#))
- III. The Elder’s Concern (vv. [7–8](#))
- IV. The Elder’s Warning (vv. [9–11](#))
- V. Closing: The Elder’s Farewell (vv. [12–13](#))<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Crossway Bibles. (2008). *The ESV Study Bible* (pp. 2439-2440). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.