

Notes on Johannes' Second Letter

Authorship and Date

The style and word usage of this short letter are undoubtedly the same as those of the letter called "Johannes' First" and of the account of Jesus' life that is identified with Johannes, one of the Twelve, the son of Zebediah. For that reason, I defer to the commentary on "The Good Message According to Johannes" for the authorship issues.

As for the date, the subject matter places the time of writing prior to the fall of Jerusalem (and therefore prior to Revelation), but the letter was surely written well after the first letter or the "Good Message," for the author here refers to himself as an elderly man (indicating that he was now roughly 60 years of age or older). I date the letter, then, to c. 60-65 CE, as tensions between non-Christian Jews and Christians were coming to a head and as the First Revolt was about to erupt.

The recipient of the letter appears to have been an older woman taking care of her family. Quite possibly, given the closing salutation, the recipient was the author's sister-in-law. The woman's household (including her descendants, servants, and slaves) were all Christian converts, but various Christians who had returned to Judaism had been trying to influence them to leave the Messianic movement and return to mainstream Judaism.

The elderly man to the chosen Kuria,

The Greek word κυρία signifies "lady." It may indicate a woman's name (as rendered above) or merely be a title of reverence. Johannes acknowledges the lady (or Kuria) as a Christian, a "chosen one."

and to her children, whom I love in truth (and not I alone, but also all those who know the truth):

Finishing his opening address, the author mentions his own personal affection for his reader and her family, politely mentioning that everyone who has heard of their good reputation loves them.

Through that truth which remains in us and will be with us for the age: Generosity, mercy, and peace will be with us in truth and love from Father God and from Anointed Jesus the Father's son.

Following the address, this completes the salutation. As in all of the author's writings, "the truth" refers to the internal principles of the Torah as explained by Jesus, who had summarized the teachings of the Torah as trust and love. Johannes hopes that the truth "will be with us" (i.e., with her family, since he is sure of his own salvation). He is concerned that some members of her

household might be listening to the Judaizing party. The traditional blessings come "in truth" (the Messianic teachings) and "love" -- which is the summary of those teachings.

I rejoiced greatly that I found one of your children walking in truth, just as we received the precept from the Father. And now I am begging you, Kuria (not as though it is a new precept that I am writing to you; on the contrary, it is one that we had from the beginning), that we should love one another. And this is love: that we walk according to his precepts. This is the precept, just as you heard from the beginning, in order that you may walk in it.

The reason for the letter is that Johannes has heard from one of her children about the struggles that they are going through. While he is delighted that this son or daughter is still faithful to the spiritual Torah, he has become aware that not all of them are still living the spiritual principles, because certain former Christians have convinced them that Jesus was not really the Messiah.

The author is careful, therefore, to say that the spiritual Torah comes from "the Father," and not merely from the mouth of Jesus alone. The summation of the Torah as a principle of love is not new, for they were in the Torah. In fact, they constitute what Jesus called the "greatest" of the precepts: "Love Yahweh your God with all of your heart, and all of your soul, and all of your strength, and all of your mind;" and "you will love your neighbor as yourself." Therefore, although Jesus explained them recently, the precepts about loving one another are not "new."

Johannes has not changed the Messianic teaching, for it is the same message that Jesus gave (about 30 years ago) when he walked the earth. Despite problems raised by Jewish people (especially after the advent of gentile Christianity), the message has been consistent since Jesus spoke it, and indeed since the Torah first offered it.

Because many deceivers have gone out into creation -- those who do not acknowledge that Anointed Jesus came in the flesh. This person is the deceiver and the one who opposes the Anointed One. Look at yourselves, so that you would not lose the things that we worked on, but that you might receive a full reward.

The people who "oppose the Anointed One" are the same here as in the author's first letter. In fact, similar persons are mentioned in the other NT letters as well. Some people were claiming to be followers of Jesus, yet they did not acknowledge the Messianic teachings ("the truth"), and they would not accept him as Messiah. In this, they were deceiving others, for no one can be his follower unless they accept who he was and agree to his internalization of the Torah. And so, the author uses a strong word, "deceiver," to describe these people, urging Kuria and her family to carefully examine themselves. They should make sure that they are not being pulled back into Judaism, to the point of losing all that they had gained from following Jesus.

No one who goes ahead and does not remain in the teaching of the Anointed One has God. The one who remains in the teaching: this one has both the Father and the son. If someone comes to you who does not carry this teaching, do not take him into your house or even say hello to him. For the one who says hello to him is sharing in his deeds of evil.

The person who rejects Jesus as Messiah and who abandons Jesus' explanation of trust and love is the one who "goes ahead." Johannes' wording again is very strong: no one who knowingly rejects Jesus "has God" (for they will have rejected the Messiah that God sent them), but whoever keeps Jesus' teachings has God (and of course, they have their Messiah).

These deceivers shouldn't even be invited into the home. So extreme is the author's concern that he warns Kuria's family not to even greet such a person. Saying "hello" to a known deceiver is like publically accepting the lies that he spreads.

Since I have many things to write to you, I did not want to do so with paper and ink. Instead, I hope to happen by you and to speak mouth to mouth, so that your joy may be completed.

"Mouth to mouth" -- We would say, "face to face" or "in person." Johannes hopes to see them soon, and history does not record whether or not he ever saw his readers or what their eventual fate was.

The children of your chosen sister greet you.

This appears to have been a greeting from the author's wife to her sister. The notion that the author's whole references to ladies, sisters, and children is an analogy for Christian groups and the people who take part in them is without foundation, for there is no evidence that Johannes ever used such language. This lone sentence serves as a rapid conclusion.