An Overview Of The Book Of 2 John

Writer Of The Second Letter Of John:

"The elder," 2 John 1.

The author introduced himself simply as "the elder". Since the writer of Second and Third John only identified himself as "the elder", in the early Church there were some who questioned whether the writer was the apostle John or another writer of the same name. In Book III, Chapter 25 of his Ecclesiastical History Eusebius informs us that although these two letters of John were disputed by some, they were well known and approved by many in the early Church and recognized by most ecclesiastical writers of that age. Since then Second and Third John have been recognized as having been written by the apostle John. John's authorship is evident from the content and literary style of his second and third letters, which are like that of the First Letter of John. Like John's first letter, his second letter dwells on the truth of Jesus Christ the Son of God and the Christian faith, on the commandment to love one another, on the heresy of the false teachers who are antichrists, and on the insistence one must hold to the truth and teaching of Christ to have God the Father.

John probably identified himself as "the elder" in his second and third letters for two reasons First, he wrote the letter late in his life when he was an elderly man. He was the last of the apostles. The others had preceded him in death. Second, in Asia in the areas surrounding Ephesus, where he had served from before A.D. 70 to around A.D. 100, he was well known and highly regarded as the elderly, grand spokesman for the Church and the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Accordingly, he then referred to himself simply as "the elder."

For more information about the apostle John see the Overview On The Gospel Of John in the Gospel of John.

Recipients Of The Second Letter Of John:

"To the chosen mistrress and to her children," 2 John 1.

This address at first may give the impression that John wrote his second letter to one particular Christian woman and her children. Further reflection on the content of the letter, however, indicates it was most likely written to one of the churches in Asia. "The chosen mistress and her children" is better understood as a figure of speech for a church and its members. The word for church in the original Greek is a feminine noun that lends itself to being referred to with the pronouns "she" and "her".

Several statements in the letter fit a church and its members better than an individual family of a mother and her children. John's words about this mistress and her children in the address, "Whom I love in the truth, and not only I, but also all who have come to know the truth," is one such statement. Likewise, John's closing greeting in 2 John 13 is another. There John wrote: "The children of your chosen sister greet you." This seems better understood as meaning that the church with its members where John was located when he wrote the letter was sending its greetings to the church with its members to which John was writing. It is a common practice to speak of churches that are in fellowship with one another as sister congregations. Another statement that better fits a church than an individual Christian woman is that of 2 John 4: "I was made extremely happy because I have found some of your children walking in *the* truth, just as we received commandment from the Father." This statement can be understood quite naturally to mean some members of the church were upholding the truth of Christ and the Christian faith in the face of the heresies of the false teachers who were disturbing the Christians of Asia. The admonitions to fulfill the commandment to love one another (see 2 John 5, 6) and the warning to watch out for the many deceivers and not assist them in their false teaching (see 2 John 7-11) also fit a church better than one Christian woman and her family.

Arguments from silence are weak at best. Yet, if the second letter was not written to a church but to a particular woman, then why did John not name her by name as he named the man Gaius by name to whom he wrote his third letter?

Understanding John's second letter was written to a church, and knowing John served the church in Ephesus and its surrounding areas, the recipients were most likely one of the churches in what is now the

country of Turkey to which John wrote his first circular letter. For more information about the recipients see the Overview On The Book Of 1 John in the Book of 1 John.

Place Where The Second Letter Of John Was Written:

Like John's first letter, his second letter was most likely written in the city of Ephesus.

Date Of The Second Letter Of John:

John's second letter was probably written not long after his first letter around A.D. 90 to A.D. 100. For more information on the date of writing, see the Overview On The Book Of 1 John.

Occasion Of The Second Letter Of John:

The members of the church to whom John wrote his second letter were being disturbed by deceiving false teachers, who denied Jesus is Christ the Son of God. They were probably the same Gnostics led by Cerinthus, whom John wrote against in his first letter. For more information about Cerinthus and early Gnosticism see the Overview On The Book of 1 John, the section entitled "Occasion And Purpose".

Purpose Of The Second Letter Of John:

John's purpose was to strengthen and encourage the church to walk in the truth and love in contrast to what the many false teachers were telling them. The church members were to guard themselves against those false teachers and were not to assist them in spreading their heresies.

Theme Of The Second Letter Of John:

Walk In The Truth And Love, And Beware Of The Many Deceivers

2 John

Greeting 2 John 1-3

¶ 1 The elder;
To the chosen mistress[1] and to her children, whom I love in the truth, and not only I, but also all who have come to know the truth,
2 on account of the truth, which remains in us and will be with us eternally:
3 Grace, mercy, peace will be with us, from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

Walk in the Truth and Love One Another 2 John 4-6

¶ 4 I was made extremely happy because I have found some of your children walking in *the* truth, just as we received commandment from the Father.
5 And now I am asking you, mistress, (not as writing a new commandment to you, but *a commandment* that we have had from the beginning) that we continue loving one another.
6 And this is this[2] love, that we continue walking according to his commandments. This is the commandment, as you have heard *it* from the beginning, that you continue walking in it.

Watch Out for the Deceivers 2 John 7-11

¶ 7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.
8 Keep watching yourselves, in order that you do not lose the things that you have accomplished but receive a full reward.
9 Everyone who goes ahead and does not remain in the teaching of Christ does not have God; the one who remains in the teaching, this person[3] has both the Father and the Son.

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[1] Possibly a term for a Christian congregation

[2] Lit. the love

[3] Lit. this one

10 If someone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, keep from receiving him into *your* house and resist saying to him, “Glad to see you!”
11 For the one who says to him, “Glad to see you!” makes himself a partner in his wicked works.

Closing Greetings 2 John 12, 13

¶ 12 While I have many things to write to you, just now I was not wishing *to do so* with paper and ink, but I am hoping to come to you and to speak face to face[4] *with you*, in order that our joy may be made full.
¶ 13 The children of your chosen sister greet you.

[4] Lit. mouth to mouth