

of God and His self-revelation as unimportant or even wrong. Rather, John is teaching us that as we grow in our faith, our understanding and appreciation of the fundamental truths, the foundation of our faith, will grow and our resolve to abide by faith in these truths will be strengthened more and more.

The words of Peter speak to this very subject:

You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Yeshua Messiah. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (2Pet 3:17–18)

Once again, John has made it amply clear that one cannot think to have a genuine relationship with God the Father if one denies or refuses to confess Yeshua to be the very Son of God, the only Savior sent by the Father to redeem all who will be saved. And John is simply teaching what Yeshua Himself taught. Speaking to His disciples He said:

The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me. (Lk 10:16)

He who hates Me hates My Father also. (Jn 15:23)<sup>1</sup>

**10–11 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.**

The Greek construction of the opening clause gives the sense that John expects false teachers will continue to visit the community to which he writes, with the purpose of seeking to lead people into their errant ways.<sup>2</sup> He therefore gives the community warning and direction

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- 1 The use of the word “hate” (μισέω, *miseō*) in this verse no doubt answers to the use of the Hebrew word שָׂנֵא (*sānaʾ*, “to hate”) in covenant contexts, which is opposite of אָהַב (*ʾāhav*, “to love”). “Hate” is to despise the covenant, while “to love” is to remain loyal to the covenant.
  - 2 *ei* + indicative verb indicates a 1st class condition, which presumes a real event in the protasis and the required action in the apodosis.

for how they are to act when a false teacher arrives. There is a question, however, whether John's admonition in these verses pertain to a recognized teacher, or if they likewise would apply to anyone who comes and seeks to persuade people to deny the teaching of Yeshua and His apostles. It seems most likely that all who take up the role of "teacher," whether recognized as bearing that title or not, fall under the same category and are therefore not to be tolerated.

That which distinguishes a false teacher from a true one is the content of the message, and John is specific: anyone who comes and does "not bring this teaching" (ταύτην τὴν διδαχὴν οὐ φέρει) is not to remain. "This teaching" relates to the person and work of Yeshua, His having come from the Father, and His being equal in all of His divine attributes with the Father. For to deny Yeshua is to deny the Father, which can only mean that they are equally the object of true saving faith and that right-standing with the Father is possible only through faith in Yeshua, made known by an outward confession of Yeshua as well as a life that changes to be conformed to Him.

Many in our times may consider John's admonitions to be unloving and therefore unbecoming of a believing community. Dodd thinks that John is giving this stern warning in a situation he deemed to be an emergency, and that it should not be taken as normative.<sup>1</sup> Barclay agrees and states that "emergency regulations make bad law and that love must find a way."<sup>2</sup> But these inspired words of John are not relegated to a situation that is viewed as an emergency, for every time a "wolf in sheep's clothing" comes into a community, there is the sure potential for leading others astray and into the path of destruction.

But what exactly is John teaching us here? Are we to never confront false teachers, or seek to show them their error and turn them to the truth? No, John is not giving a "no-contact" order in his words. What he is teaching us here is that we should never support and aid a false teacher to go about his errant ways and seek to trap others in his falsehoods. Considering the remarks of Dodd and Barclay, Akin offers this response:

These judgments, however, totally miss John's point and do not consider the historical situation. The elder is not demanding that they refuse to engage in conversation with someone who is spiritually confused. He is not saying you cannot invite them into your home for a visit where you confront them

1 C. H. Dodd, *Johannine Epistles*, p. 152.

2 Quoted from Akin, *2John*, p. 233. See also Brown, *2John*, pp. 691–93 who partially supports Dodd's viewpoint.

with the claims of Christ. What he is saying is that we are not to provide support and aid (e.g., a place to stay and money) to anyone who is spreading false teaching and disseminating error.<sup>1</sup>

But while Akin gives good advice as to how this text is to be understood and applied, I would add that bringing anyone into one's home, or even into the believing community, knowing that they do not receive "the teaching" to which John refers, must be done with due caution and with a clear purpose of confronting them with the truth, and keeping a close check upon them to guard those who may be weak in their faith from being misguided.

Some have suggested that when John speaks of bringing a false teacher "in to your house," he is referring to "the house used for Community meetings."<sup>2</sup> But it is far from certain that the early communities of The Way usually met in homes. In fact, current scholarly research has suggested that gatherings in homes were not as common as once thought.<sup>3</sup> Rather, when "house" is combined with the next phrase, "give him a greeting," this would favor the interpretation that in this context, John is speaking of common dwellings as well as meeting places for the whole community.

Once again, the test for whether a teacher is to be received or not has also been laid down in 1John.

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Yeshua Messiah has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Yeshua is not from God; this is the spirit of the anti-Messiah, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

... and do not give him a greeting. – The Greek reads *καὶ χαίρειν αὐτῷ μὴ λέγετε* where the infinitive *χαίρειν* (*chairein*), "to greet" is related to the noun *χάρις* (*xaris*), "grace." The point is that one is not to greet a false teacher as though he is welcomed as a believing member of the community. This seems to be the thrust of John's words here and we must be careful not to widen the meaning of this text so far as though we are

1 Akin, *Ibid.*

2 Brown, *2John*, p. 676.

3 See Edward Adams, *The Earliest Christian Meeting Places*, Revised Edition (T & T Clark, 2016).

excluding all unbelievers. Stott notes that this verse ought to be taken to heart both by those who hold out a welcome to everyone as well as to those who, on the other hand, think it is their duty to separate from everyone with whom they disagree.

This verse is relevant both to compromisers who refuse to withdraw from anyone and to separatists who like to withdraw from almost everybody.<sup>1</sup>

In our modern times, the culture in which we live is moved far beyond compromising to the post-modern mantra that every viewpoint has value and must be accepted. But the Scriptures quite obviously speak against such modernity, for what is of God is marked as clearly opposed to that which is contrary to His righteousness. In short, what John so clearly teaches us here is that false teachers and their false teaching stand in opposition to the truth of God and we are to recognize the distinctions and act accordingly. So it is important to discern the specifics of John's admonition in this verse so that we can apply them to ourselves and the community of which we are members.

As noted above, it seems clear that John's exhortation in this verse is primarily being addressed to the whole community and not to individuals. From the opening of the epistle, we know that it is being addressed to the community, which John cryptically calls "the chosen lady and her children" (v. 1). Thus, while this could apply to one's private dwelling, it seems most likely to have the primary emphasis as a warning to the whole assembly that they are not to welcome a known false teacher to come and teach his errors. This view is strengthened by the fact that John uses the plural when he writes "If anyone comes to you" where the "you" is plural. Likewise, the imperative "do not receive" (μὴ λαμβάνετε) is cast in the plural form, as "you all must not receive," which seems most likely to indicate that John is addressing the whole group and not specifically individuals. Likewise, while most English translations have "do not receive him into *your* house," the word "your" is not in the Greek and the anarthrous<sup>2</sup> εἰς οἰκίαν (*eis oikian*) could just as well be understood as "into community," for the word group that consists of οἰκία, *oikia* (feminine) and οἶκος, *oikos* (masculine) can both indicate a "social unit within a dwelling, household, family."<sup>3</sup>

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1 Stott, 2John, p. 213.

2 i.e., not having the definite article "the".

3 So BDAG, "οἰκία," 2., p. 695; cf. Matt 12:25; 13:57; Mk 3:25; 6:4; and "οἶκος," 2., p. 698, cf. Lk 10:5; 19:9; Ac 10:2; 11:14; 16:31; 18:8; 1 Ti 3:4, 12; 1 Pt 2:5

Furthermore, οἶκος (*oikos*) is used both by Paul and by Peter to refer to the *ekklesia* as the “household of God.”

but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God (οἶκῳ θεοῦ), which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. (1Tim 3:15)

For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? (1Pet 4:17)

To reiterate the central point in this text: In warning us about receiving false teachers into our community, or into our private homes, it is clear that the issue John specifically mentions is that the false teacher “does not bring this teaching” (ταύτην τὴν διδαχὴν οὐ φέρει). The context of this brief epistle details what John means by “this teaching.” It centers in the person of Yeshua, that He is the Son of God come in the flesh, the Messiah promised by Israel’s prophets, and the One Who is Immanuel, “God with us,” and the only One through Whom sins can be forgiven in the court of God, for He, the sinless Lamb, died for all who would be saved, to pay the penalty of their sin. And by His resurrection on the third day, He was declared to be the “Son of God with power” (Rom 1:4) and thus the only Savior of sinners. Moreover, by His very words only those who put their faith in Him will be saved.

Yeshua said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. (Jn 14:6)

Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins. (Jn 8:24)

A final application of John’s admonition in this verse: His strong words, warning us not to accept false teachers as though they were actually members of God’s family through faith in Yeshua, need to be applied in our digital, internet world, where untold numbers of false teachers are peddling their false teachings all dressed up in attractive garb and promising success and even wealth to those who follow their errant instructions. Never before has there been such a robust, easily utilized method for disseminating teachings, and this means that the people of God must be all the more diligent to test all things against the unchanging standard of God’s word. This also means that we must know our Bible and be able to detect anything in that which we read or hear which is at variance with the truth revealed to us by God.

for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds. – The first question is what John means by the words “gives him a greeting” (ὁ λέγων γὰρ αὐτῷ χαίρειν) which has the sense in the Greek of “for the one saying to him, ‘Greetings!’” Whether this is an initial greeting, “you are welcome to come in” or a goodbye greeting “Godspeed as you depart,” is not certain, but most likely John has the general sense of accepting the false teacher in and even hoping for his well being as he departs. In general, the idea of giving someone a “greeting,” as the Greek χαίρω (*chairō*) would indicate, was to offer a “formalized greeting, wishing one well,”<sup>1</sup> which likewise would indicate one’s desire that he would have success in his teaching efforts.

John is very clear about what such a greeting entails. The one who accommodates or offers words of encouragement to the false teacher, actually “participates in his evil deeds.” The Greek word here translated by the English “participates” is κοινωνέω (*koinōneō*), which is connected to the noun κοινωνία (*koinōnia*), which means “to have a close association together; a close relationship; to engage in fellowship together.” Indeed, that which characterized the early assemblies of The Way included “fellowship.”

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship (κοινωνία), to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Acts 2:42)

And the verbal form of the word, found in our text, is regularly used to describe the manner in which the believing communities of The Way “shared” their means with other believing communities to help meet their urgent needs.

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing (κοινωνεω) to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. (Rom 12:10–13)

The one who is taught the word is to share (κοινωνεω) all good things with the one who teaches him. (Gal 6:6)

You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no *ekklesia* shared (κοινωνεω) with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; (Phil 4:15)

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1 BDAG, “χαίρω,” p. 1075.

Given these texts of Paul, it seems quite clear that communities were expected to share “all good things” with the teachers who taught them, and such would have likewise been the case with the false teachers who sought audience as they traveled from city to city.

Likewise, it seems quite possible that those who had left the community to which John wrote his first epistle, those who denied Yeshua and sought to persuade others in the community to follow them in their errant beliefs, may have been those who were seeking audience in the “sister” community to which John writes his second epistle. That such false teachers and prophets appear to have been common is evidenced by the *Didache*, most likely written in the late 1st Century or early decades of the 2nd Century. In the *Didache*, we read of those who come requiring to be remunerated for their teaching, and in this apocryphal work, such requirement marks him as a false teacher.

Now concerning the apostles and prophets, deal with them as follows in accordance with the rule of the gospel. Let every apostle who comes to you be welcomed as if he were the Lord. But he is not to stay for more than one day, unless there is need, in which case he may stay another. But if he stays three days, he is a false prophet. And when the apostle leaves, he is to take nothing except bread until he finds his next night's lodging. But if he asks for money, he is a false prophet. (*Didache* 11:3–6)

We too must take John's inspired words to heart. Allowing false teachers to be welcomed in our homes or in our gathered assemblies is to participate in their falsehoods. Now, surely we may read what such teachers have written, or listen to or watch their recorded teachings in order to critique them and warn others, but we must not “greet them,” meaning we are not to approve their false claims or in any manner encourage their cause or contribute to it. John's words are plain: to do so is to “fellowship,” to “join them” or “participate” in their evil endeavors to deny the truth of Who Yeshua is and what He has therefore accomplished in His work of saving His people. Akin offers this conclusion to vv. 10–11 and John's stern words regarding false teachers:

John says there is to be no encouragement whatsoever. Showing hospitality or verbal agreement would be to participate in their evil work. Although there is to be no rudeness on the part of a believer, neither is there to be the slightest encouragement to these teachers who spread the cancer of false teaching. The issue of truth is crucial. It must be preserved at all cost. To act in any other manner would be to invite spiritual suicide.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Akin, *2John*, p. 234.



Once again, we see in John what we recognize in all of the writings of the Apostles, that they are constantly reinforcing the centrality of Yeshua in all aspects of our faith.

**12 Though I have many things to write to you, I do not want to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, so that your joy may be made full.**

We may speculate that John has written such a brief letter because there was some urgency to communicate with this community which was “sister” to the community to which he addressed his first epistle. It also sounds reasonable to surmise that those whom John indicates he had met, who were from the community to which he addresses his second epistle, had informed him about false teachers who were seeking an audience with the community with the hopes of persuading them to accept their false messages about Yeshua. So in the conclusion to this epistles, he makes it clear that its brevity is not to be received as though he only has words of warning and stern exhortations. He makes it clear that he has far more to communicate, but that he wants to do so in person rather than through writing. We all know that speaking together is often a far better way to communicate our thoughts, for the written word can, at times, be misconstrued or misunderstood, and this is all the more the case when dealing with sensitive issues which may even require stern warnings, exhortations, or even rebukes.

The way that John concludes 2John is very similar to his next epistle, 3John. Note 3John 1:13–14.

I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write them to you with pen and ink; but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face. (3Jn 1:13-14)

What we know as 3John is addressed to an individual by the name of Gaius, indicating that John is writing to a different community than the one he addresses in 2John. As such, the similarities between these two epistles would strengthen the idea that they were written close together without much of a time gap between. It likewise seems reasonable that John intended to visit both communities on the same journey.

John makes known that he desired his further communication to be in person rather than with “paper and ink.” Obviously our English translation “paper” is used to convey generally a common writing material. In John’s day, it was papyrus (χάρτης, *xartēs*), made from a rush-like or grass-like plant of the genus *Carex*, growing in wet places.