

March 1, 2016

UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING 2nd JOHN: 5-11

When we consider the context of these verses, we conclude that John is addressing first the specific problem concerning one who is a deceiver and an antichrist, who was once a member of the (an) ecclesia, who confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. His instruction is that if any come unto you with this egregious, salvation destroying doctrinal error, that we should not receive him into our ecclesia, neither bid him God speed (“wish him success”-Diaglott). *“For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds”* (2nd John 11). In verse 9, John broadens his admonition to any brethren who do not hold to the teachings of Christ (the doctrine of Christ), of which Christ's nature is a subset. Those who have abandoned the doctrine of Christ are likewise not to be welcomed into the ecclesia. **This exhorted principle and course of action is immediate and decisive**, and it requires swift rejection of the deceiver and antichrist and one who doesn't abide in the doctrine of Christ. All who are current members of that Ecclesia, who are willing to accept the individuals and their teachings into that ecclesia and bid him Godspeed, are partakers in the evil and Yahweh will impute sin to them according to His will. (The messages to the Ecclesia's of the Apocalypse are our example, cp. Rev. 2:20-23).

When we apply the principles outlined in these verses more broadly, for example to a brother within the ecclesia who is now promoting doctrinal error, we must include in our approach other Scriptural instructions that are appropriate to the circumstance, the degree of error and with deep consideration for a brother in Christ. We must make every attempt to convince him of his error, encouraging repentance, understanding that if such is not possible, he will be removed from our fellowship as an act of love. **This Scriptural course of action is not swift and decisive; it involves patience and longsuffering.**

We all agree that we must not allow any false teaching or immorality to go unchecked in our respective ecclesias. We must *“reprove, rebuke and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine”* (2nd Tim. 4:2-4). Elders must move quickly to identify such problems and confront the offender, with an intended goal of restoring the brother if possible.

We must be willing when necessary to withdraw from *“every brother that walketh disorderly”* or depending on the circumstance, to *“have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.”* We should *“count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother”* (2nd Thess. 3: 6, 14-15). Those that cause divisions, we must avoid (Rom. 16:17). Those that *“neglect to hear the ecclesia, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican”* (Matt. 18:17).

As we exercise this necessary fellowship discipline in our respective ecclesias, it must reflect steadfastness to the doctrine of the apostles, all the while exhibiting love and patience, always attempting to restore *“in the spirit of meekness”* (Gal 6:1). Having *“compassion, making a difference”* (Jude: 22). We must be *“apt to teach and patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth”* (2nd Tim. 2: 24-25).