

2 John

Limits to Love

Aid True Teachers			Avoid False Teachers	
Verses 1-6			Verses 7-13	
Walk in Commandments			Watch for Counterfeits	
Positive			Negative	
Demonstrate Truth			Defend Truth	
Greeting in Truth and Love (1-3)	Children's Obedience Commended (4)	Exhortation to Love (5-6)	Prohibition to Help False Teachers (7-11)	Expected Visit & Greetings (12-13)
Ephesus				
AD 85-95				

Key Word: Limits

Key Verses: “Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your home or welcome him” (2 John 9-10).

Summary Statement: The way to live out the gospel is to show hospitality to true missionaries but limit that love by *not aiding false teachers*.

Application: Don't contribute to or encourage in any way Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses or any other false religion.

2 John

Introduction

- I. **Title:** The Greek title (*Ἰωάννου β΄* *Second of John*) follows the standard practice of naming the General Epistles after their authors and distinguishes this epistle from John's two others.
- II. **Authorship**
 - A. **External Evidence:** The Church has long viewed this epistle as penned by the Apostle John, leader of the church of Ephesus in Asia Minor and author of the Gospel, 1 John, 3 John and Revelation.
 - B. **Internal Evidence:** The designation “the elder” (v. 1) has always been considered another designation for John until the rise of liberal scholarship. Themes such as love (vv. 1, 3, 5, 6), joy (vv. 4, 12; cf. 1 John 1:4), truth (v. 4), and antichrist (v. 7) bear remarkable resemblance to emphases in 1 John and the Gospel of John.
- III. **Circumstances**
 - A. **Date:** Most scholars believe that John recorded this epistle about AD 90, although nothing in it excludes an earlier date (see 1 John notes). Thus it was written in about AD 85-95.
 - B. **Origin/Recipients:** John invested the final years of his ministry in Ephesus, which makes this capital of Asia the likely origin. The letter is addressed to the “chosen lady and her children” (v. 1), which has caused some debate as to who really is being addressed.
 1. Some see the title as a personified form for a local church and cite the following arguments:
 - a. No personal names are found in the epistle—either for the woman herself, her children or her nephews (in contrast to 3 John).
 - b. The literary form which addresses nations, cities, and churches as female personages is common in the Bible (“the daughter of Zion” for Israel; “the bride of Christ” for the church in Eph. 5:29f.; 2 Cor. 6:2f.; “she who is in Babylon” for a church in 1 Peter 5:13).
 - c. “The greeting in verse 13 is more natural if sent from one church to another than from a group of people to their aunt by means of a third party” (Guthrie, 892).
 - d. John often referred to the people in the church as “children” (1 John 2:12, etc.).
 - e. Nothing is known in the New Testament of a woman named *Eklekta* or *Kyria*—the Greek titles for “chosen” and “lady” which some see as the woman’s name.
 - f. The lady was known not only by John, but by “all who know the truth” (v. 1), which is more probable if it refers to a community than to a woman.
 - g. The subject matter on false teachers matches that of a church more than that of an individual, “although this might have been equally necessary for a prominent private person in the habit of entertaining visitors freely” (Guthrie, 892).
 - h. The predominant use of the second person plural (vv. 8, 10, 12) suggests a composite community more than a family.
 - i. The “new commandment” (v. 5) “has more point if applied to a community rather than to the narrower limits of a family circle” (Guthrie, 892).

2. The Virgin Mary who resided in Galilee (Knauer's view cited by Barnes, 1501).
3. An anonymous woman and her children are addressed (v. 1), who probably opened their home for church services and housed traveling preachers. This more literal view depicts a woman in a local church and is probably right for many reasons:
 - a. Her children are mentioned (vv. 1, 4) and "the reference to the lady's children is quite intelligible if these were by now grown up" (Guthrie, 891).
 - b. She may have been named *Eklecta* ("chosen") or more likely *Kyria* ("lady," a popular proper name for Christian women [although only in later times]; cf. Barnes, 1501) as the Syriac and Arabic versions translate it as a proper name
 - c. Possible grammatical constructions include "the Elect Lady," "an Elect Lady," "Eklecta the Lady," "The elect Kyria," and "Eklecta Kyria."
 - d. This better distinguishes between the woman herself and her children (physically or spiritually). If the "lady" is the church, then who are the "children"?
 - e. If the "lady" refers to the leader of the church then it would be odd to refer to the leader of a church by a feminine title.
 - f. The NT pattern for addressing churches is to refer to them by name.
 - g. The woman's name may have been kept secret to protect her from persecution.
 - h. It's best to follow the literal sense unless it doesn't make sense (it does here).
 - i. The woman's nephews and nieces (v. 13) make good sense taken literally.
 - j. Adopting the literal meaning better accounts for the reluctance of some of the early Christians to use this epistle. "A private letter written to a lady would not seem of sufficient importance to receive canonical status" (Guthrie, 893).
- C. Occasion: Before the New Testament writings were completed and circulated among the early believers, the churches had to rely upon traveling preachers and teachers for truth. Since inns were unsafe and few in number, these teachers stayed with Christians. A question with which many struggled was, "How could believers know *which* teachers to allow into their homes?" John answers this question in this epistle where he pointedly commands a hospitable woman to "put limits on her love" by refusing to house false teachers or to encourage them in any way.

IV. Characteristics

- A. This letter is the second shortest book in the Bible (3 John is slightly shorter; cf. p. 306).
- B. This is the only NT letter addressed to a woman.
- C. Verse 10 is the most controversial part of this letter. The issue is whether false teachers should be allowed to: (1) stay in believer's homes, (2) enter their homes, or (3) neither. The third view is the normal interpretation so that believers are not involved in promoting false teaching even in the slightest sense. See the study on pages 302-4 for different views on this subject.

Argument

John's second epistle warns a woman zealous in hospitality against providing lodging to false teachers so she wouldn't help spread their destructive doctrines. His greeting balances truth and love to illustrate this point (vv. 1-3), followed by a commendation of the woman for her love (v. 4) balanced with the importance of truth (vv. 5-6). Next follows the main teaching of the letter that warns her to show her love with discerning limits by refusing hospitality to false teachers (vv. 7-11). A conclusion follows (vv. 12-13). The basic format is to support the truth (vv. 1-6), implying continued aid to true teachers, followed by warning against supporting false teachers (vv. 7-13).

Synthesis

Limits to love

1-6	Aid True Teachers
1-3	Greeting in truth and love
1a	Author
1b-2	Recipients
3	Blessing
4	Commendation for children's obedience
5-6	Exhortation to love
7-13	Avoid False Teachers
7-11	Prohibition to help false teachers
7	Heresy defined
8-9	Rewards lost for aiding heresy
10-11	Never aid heresy
12-13	Expected visit/greetings

Outline

Summary Statement for the Book

The way to live out the gospel is to show hospitality to true missionaries but limit that love by *not aiding false teachers*.

- I. **The way a woman should live out the gospel was to balance love with truth (1-6).**
 - A. John greets a woman and her children with an emphasis on truth and love to prepare them for his warning on misguided love by helping heretics (1-3).
 1. John identifies himself so the recipients might know that the contents have the stamp of apostolic authority (1a).
 2. A woman and her children are greeted in love and truth anonymously probably to protect them from persecution (1b-2).
 - a) The recipients—a woman and her children—are unnamed likely to protect them from persecution if the letter fell into the wrong hands (1b).
 - b) The recipients are affectionately greeted in love and truth to show that these traits must be kept in balance to guard the faith (1c-2).
 - (1) John loves this woman based on truth as do all who know God since true love is based upon truth (1c).
 - (2) Love is based on God's eternal, indwelling truth so the woman might see that her response to his limits on love should protect the truth (2).

- (3) God's blessings always balance truth and love so John's upcoming teaching on love must be limited by truth (3).
- B. John commends the woman for the obedience of her children to soften his later correction with sincere appreciation (4).
1. The woman's children living the truth brought John joy, thus affirming his high esteem for her before his later correction (4a).
 2. That the woman's children also please God the Father by their obedience is noted to encourage her with divine approval (4b).
- C. John exhorts the woman to practice truth in a life of obedient love so that she won't think by his later comments that he is discouraging love altogether (5-6).
1. God always expects those who fear him to love one another so the woman should not misunderstand John's later rebuke as discouraging love altogether (5).
 2. A life of love is shown as it always has been—obedience to God's commands (6).
- II. The way John encouraged the hospitable woman to proclaim the gospel was to warn her not to help false teachers (7-13).**
- A. The hospitable woman must protect the truth with a discerning love that has limits by not assisting heretics who deny that Christ is God become man (7-11).
1. False teachers who deny that Christ is incarnate God are numerous, deceptive and against Christ, so the woman should consider if she supporting them (7).
 2. The woman could lose her rewards by aiding or believing false teachers' heresies to encourage her to please God by remaining steadfast in doctrine (8-9).
 - a) Believers can lose rewards previously earned so the woman should consider whether her aid to false teachers really receives God's blessing (8).
 - b) Rewards can be lost when believers support heresy against God, so she should please God by remaining steadfast in doctrine (9).
 3. Believers must never spread heresy by inviting heretics inside their home or even greeting them to stress discerning limits based on the truth of the gospel (10-11).
 - a) A Christian must never invite a heretic inside his home or even greet them, so this woman's love must be discerning and have limits (10).
 - b) Anyone who even greets a proselytizing false teacher encourages him in his heresies and promotes Satan's work (11).
- B. A visit to clarify heresies is better than a letter so John hoped to see the woman and sent greetings from her sister's children to end this serious letter affectionately (12-13).
1. John wants to clarify his teaching about discerning love by a personal visit that is better than a letter and would be a joyful rather than stern time (12).
 - a) More teaching on the delicate subject of responding to false teachers is needed, but not through a letter (12a).
 - b) A personal, face-to-face visit would better clarify John's teaching and result in a joyful time rather than a list of stern regulations (12b).
 2. John sends greetings from her nephews and nieces to end affectionately (13).

The Meaning of 2 John 10

A Study of How to Respond to False Teachers

Translations

1. "... do not take him into your house or welcome him" (NIV).
2. "... do not receive him into *your* house, and do not give him a greeting" (NASB).
3. "... receive him not into *your* house, and do not bid him God speed" (KJV).
4. "... do not receive him—do not accept him, do not welcome him *or* do not admit him—into [your] house or bid him Godspeed *or* give him any encouragement" (Amplified).
5. "... don't have him inside your house; don't even greet him" (J. B. Phillips).
6. "... don't even invite him into your home. Don't encourage him in any way" (Living Bible).
7. "... don't take him into your home or greet him" (Beck).
8. "...you must stop welcoming him to your house and stop bidding him good morning" (Williams).
9. "... stop receiving him into your house. And stop giving him greeting" (Wuest)
10. "... do not receive him into the house or give him any greeting" (Revised Standard Version)
11. "... don't invite that person into your home or give any kind of encouragement" (NLT)
12. "... do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting" (ESV)
13. "... stop receiving him into [your] house and stop saying a greeting to him" (my translation)
14. ... μη' λαμβάνετε αὐτοῦν εἰς" οἰκίαν καὶ χαίρειν αὐτῷ μη' λέγετε (Greek).

Interpretive Issues

1. Definition: The lexical (dictionary) meaning of χαίρειν (χαίρω) is twofold (BAGD 873-74):
 - a. "rejoice, be glad" (e.g., Romans 12:15a "Rejoice with those who rejoice...").
 - b. used as a formula of greeting--
 - 1) as a form of address, often on meeting people... "welcome, good day, hail (to you), I am glad to see you," sometimes (e.g., Hermas) "how do you do?" or even the colloquial "hello"... "good morning"; ... "greet someone, bid someone the time of day" 2 John 10f.
 - 2) elliptically at the beginning of a letter... "greetings" (James 1:1).
2. Parallel Passages: The word is used in the sense of "b." above in 2 John 10 but also in...
 - a. "Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, '**Greetings**, Rabbi!' and kissed him" (Matt. 26:49)
 - b. "... They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of Him and mocked Him. '**Hail**, King of the Jews!' they said" (Matt. 27:29b).
 - c. "Suddenly Jesus met [the women after His resurrection]. '**Greetings**,' He said. They came to Him, clasped His feet and worshiped Him" (Matt. 28:9; cf. Mark 15:18; John 19:3).
 - d. "The angel went to her [Mary] and said, '**Greetings**, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you'" (Luke 1:28).
3. Tense Usage: The use of the present imperative tense here has either of two possibilities:
 - a. Iterative: repeat an action at successive intervals or whenever the occasion arises; i.e., "whenever a false teacher comes don't receive him into your house" (cf. J. A. Moulton, *Grammar of the New Testament Greek* [Edinburgh: T & T. Clark, 1908], 1:125).

- b. Prohibitive: a command to discontinue an action already going on; i.e., “stop receiving him into the house” (Eugene Van Ness Goetchius, *The Language of the New Testament* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965], 263).
- c. Therefore, John wrote the woman given to hospitality to immediately stop demonstrating hospitality to false teachers. This obviously could only occur the next time she had opportunity to encourage them in their propagation of their false gospel.

Some Commentators Allow Entrance Into Homes

1. John Stott makes three key observations on 2 John 10 (*The Epistles of John*, 213-14). I agree with “a.” and “c.” but show my disagreement with “b.” in brackets []:
 - a. “John is referring to teachers of false doctrine, not merely to believers in it... Christians may certainly welcome and entertain someone who holds false views, and will seek to bring him to a better mind. It is those who are engaged in the systematic dissemination of lies, dedicated missionaries of error, to whom we may give no encouragement.”
 - b. “John's instruction may well relate not only to an 'official' visit of false teachers, but to the extending to them of an 'official' welcome, rather than to private hospitality [because]:
 - (1) “this letter was addressed, to a church, not to an individual [But verse 1 says it was written to a woman and her children!], and
 - (2) “the phrase *if there come any unto you* (plural, *humas*) describes the anticipated visit of a false teacher (or group of them, verse 7) to the church in question... They had left the church where John was . . . but had evidently not yet arrived where the recipients of the Second Epistle were” [but if this were true, why didn't John specifically say, “There are some false teachers en route to you from our area . . .”? Also, the plural “you” refers to the woman and her children in verse 1 since a church is not mentioned in the letter].
 - (3) “John's order [is] not to *receive him . . . into your house*, which is literally 'into the house' (RSV). Which house? Of course he may mean that every Christian house was to be closed to the false prophets. But may it not be that John was referring to 'the house' . . . in which the church met for worship?” [Of course, the woman's house probably was also the same place believers met for worship—besides this, should false prophets be banned from church services but welcomed into private homes?]

NOTE: Stott contradicts this whole second argument (b) when he writes concerning (3) above, “How then can we make him welcome in our home or church or wish him well on his journey?” (p. 214).
 - c. “John is referring to teachers of false doctrine about the incarnation, and not to every false teacher.” [Here Stott brings up a good point: those in view are first of all *teachers*, and second, they are *not* divergent in a *small* issue (e.g., a different perspective on baptism, church structure, divorce, etc.) but a *big* issue—whether Jesus is indeed God in the flesh].
2. F. F. Bruce writes, “The injunction not to receive anyone who does not bring 'the teaching of Christ' means that no such person must be accepted as a Christian teacher or as one entitled to the fellowship of the church. It does not mean that (say) one of the Jehovah's Witnesses should not be invited into the house for a cup of tea in order to be shown the way of God more perfectly in the sitting-room than would be convenient at the doorstep” (*The Epistles of John*, 142).”

Therefore, above authors believe that the verse prohibits false teachers from a teaching ministry in the church. In this view, it does not prohibit believers from showing hospitality to false teachers within their own homes.

Some Commentators Prohibit Entrance Into Homes

1. "For their hospitality and keep [traveling Christian preachers] depended upon the generosity of the members of the church. Such hospitality was not to be offered to preachers with a false message; it can be taken for granted that they were not to be allowed to minister in the church" (I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 74, emphasis mine).
2. "Do not receive such a teacher as one who can justly claim the privilege of Christian hospitality as a brother" (B. F. Westcott, *The Epistles of St. John*, 231).
3. "Neither the local church nor the individual believer are to have any fellowship whatsoever with those teaching erroneous views which deny the person and work of Christ" (Robert Weldon Wilson, "An Exposition of Second and Third John," ThM thesis [Dallas Theological Seminary, 1955], 36, emphasis mine).

Summary of the Differing Views:

Can False Teachers . . .

<u>View</u>	<u>Stay in Believers Homes?</u>	<u>Enter Believers' Homes?</u>	<u>Adherents</u>
1	Yes	Yes	John R. Stott F. F. Bruce
2	No	Yes	Stanley Toussaint (DTS)
3	No	?	I. Howard Marshall B. F. Westcott Robert Weldon Wilson
4	No	No	Rick Griffith

Views Explained

1. False teachers can stay overnight with believers and can be invited to enter the private homes of believers because the command prohibits them only from church services (Stott, Bruce)
2. False teachers should never stay overnight with believers *but* can be invited to enter the private homes of believers for a chat (Toussaint)
3. False teachers should never stay overnight with believers but the question of staying inside for a few minutes is not addressed (Marshall, Wilson, Westcott)
4. False teachers should never stay overnight with believers *and* should never be invited to enter the private homes of believers (Griffith). In my opinion, this is the natural sense to the expression, "Do not take him into your house or welcome him." Anyone who invites a heretical teacher into his house even for a few minutes has welcomed false teaching into the home.

Modern Heresies

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THE BEREAN CALL

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God's Word: Our Guard and Guide

Dave Hunt

The fruitful man in Psalm 1 meditates upon God's Word "day and night," and not from a sense of duty but because it is his "delight." In his heart and on his mind continually, God's Word guards and guides him. How essential this is! Common sense and logic are helpful. However, without God's Word (which transcends human wisdom) to guard and guide us, we are susceptible to temptation and error, especially when the latter is presented convincingly "in the name of God" by those looked up to as Christian leaders.

God works through His Word: "[M]y word...shall not return unto me void..." (Isa 55:11); "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Ps 119:11). Satan works to snatch God's Word from the heart: "[T]hen cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart" (Mt 13:19). If it suits him, Satan quotes the Bible (Mt 4:6) and attempts to pervert it in order to deceive. He also inspires false prophets with "new revelations" which subvert the Word. We have many such "prophets" in the church today.

God's Word repeatedly warns about false prophets. We need to heed those warnings. Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets" (Mt 7:15); "[M]any false prophets shall rise...and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Mt 24:11, 24). Christ clearly warns of a last-days false signs-and-wonders movement promoted by false prophets. Paul likens the latter to Jannes and Jambres, who opposed Moses and Aaron (2 Tm 3:8) with signs and wonders done by the power of Satan.

Peter warned that just as there were false prophets in Old Testament times, "there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies..." (2 Pt 2:1). The Apostle John declared that already in his day "many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 Jn 4:1). How much more must we beware of false prophets as the prophesied last-days apostasy reaches its climax in preparing the world and a false church for the Antichrist. Knowing, loving and obeying God's Word is the only sure way not to be led astray.

Any one of the Bible's six marks of false prophets is sufficient identification: 1) through signs and wonders they lead astray after false gods (Dt 13:1-4); 2) their prophecies don't come to pass (Dt 18:20-22); 3) they contradict God's Word (Is 8:20); 4) they bear bad fruit (Mt 7:18-20); 5) all men speak well of them (Lk 6:26); 6) they deny that Jesus, the one and only Christ, has come once and for all in the flesh (1 Jn 4:3).

How tragic that God's personal letter of love and guidance to His own is so neglected today by those who call themselves Christians! Many who profess to know God and to serve Him have little or no thirst for His Word. Instead, they seek signs and wonders, emotional experiences, new revelations, the latest "move," or the gifts rather than the Giver. As a result, they are susceptible to "every wind of doctrine" (Eph 4:14) and fall prey to false teachers who "through covetousness...with feigned words make merchandise" (2 Pt 2:3) of them, "supposing that gain is

And many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many.

Matthew 24:11

godliness" (1 Tm 6:5). The popular lie of "seed faith"—that a gift to a ministry opens the door to miracles and prosperity—deceives and promotes covetousness among millions ignorant of God's Word.

The fulfillment of biblical prophecies is the great proof of God's existence, that the Bible is His Word and that Jesus Christ is the promised Savior. The false prophecies of many of today's Christian leaders are a loud warning. Heed it! Most cults are founded upon false prophecies, which, if pointed out, offer an effective way to open blind eyes and rescue cultists.

Among the false prophets throughout history were a number of the popes. As one example, Pope Gregory XI's papal bull of 1372 (*In Coena Domini*) pronounced papal dominion over the entire Christian world, secular and religious, and excommunicated all who failed to obey the popes and to pay them taxes. *In Coena* was confirmed by subsequent popes, and in 1568 Pope Pius V swore that it was to remain an eternal law. Instead, in 1870, two months after the Vatican pronounced papal infallibility, Rome was liberated from papal dominion

by Italy's army and Pope Pius IX took refuge in the Vatican, all that remained of what had been a vast empire.

Mimicking the popes, Sun Myung Moon prophesied decades ago that he would take over the world. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, founder of the Transcendental Meditation (TM) movement, declared that 1975 was the first year in "The Age of Enlightenment," 1977 was "The Year of the Ideal Society," and 1978 "The Year of Invincibility of Every Nation." No comment is necessary. Herbert W. Armstrong predicted that his Worldwide Church of God would be raptured to the ancient city of Petra in 1972 and that Christ would return to the earth in 1975 (a favorite date of many cults). In the 1970s Elijah Muhammad prophesied to his Black Muslim followers that God's return to North America was imminent.

Mormonism boasts of its prophets—but they have all been false. In 1833, founding prophet Joseph Smith prophesied that the United States would suffer unparalleled multiple disasters ("pestilence, hail, famine and earthquake") which would sweep the wicked (non-Mormons) off the land, leaving Mormons safe in their Zion haven in Missouri. Instead, they fled to Utah. Among Smith's many other false prophecies was the declaration in 1835 that Christ would return within 56 years and many living then would "not taste of death till Christ comes."¹ Smith's successor, Brigham Young, prophesied that the Civil War would not free the slaves.^{see p. 304}

Charles T. Russell's false prophecies formed the basis for what became The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society and the Jehovah's Witnesses. Russell declared that the Second Coming had taken place invisibly in October 1874, and the Lord was truly *present*, and that in 1914 the faithful (the 144,000) would be translated to heaven and the wicked destroyed. Armageddon (which began in 1874) would culminate in 1914 with the complete overthrow of earth's rulers and the end of the world. C.T. Russell, still on earth, died in 1916.

In the early 1920s, JW's zealously distributed on the streets and from door to door a book titled *Millions Now Living Will Never Die*. It was prophesied, "The year 1925 is a date definitely and clearly marked in the Scriptures, even more clearly than that of 1914...we may confidently expect that 1925 will mark the return of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the faithful prophets of

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old...to the condition of human perfection."² The JWs even built a house in San Diego where the patriarchs were to live and tried to deed it to King David. (The house was quietly sold in 1954.)

In the early 1940s, JWs were declaring that Armageddon, *only months away*, would end World War II and the defeat of the Nazis would usher in God's rule on earth.³ Their book, *Children*, suggested that plans to marry and have children be postponed until after Armageddon. It's been a long wait! Not giving up, they later prophesied that God's millennial kingdom would commence in 1975. Again JWs were told not to engage in any plans for this world, including marriage and having children. Many quit their jobs, sold their homes and dedicated themselves to going door to door.

Seventh-Day Adventism (SDA) originated with similar false prophesies about Christ's coming. (We offer an excellent book.) It began with William Miller's prediction that Christ would return in 1843 (revised to October 22, 1844). Miller admitted his error. However, SDA prophetess Ellen G. White (EGW), who had repeatedly endorsed Miller's prophecy, insisted that Christ had indeed come, but not to earth. Instead, He had entered "the holy of holies" in heaven "to make an atonement for all who are shown to be entitled to its benefits."⁴ Entitled? Many quotes could be given to prove that EGW taught salvation by works. Here are a few:

Our acts, our words, even our most secret motives, all have their weight in deciding our destiny...though...forgotten by us, they [our works] will bear their testimony to justify or condemn.⁵

When any have sins remaining upon the books of record, unrepented of and unforgiven, their names will be blotted out of the book of life...⁶

Each one of you needs to...[be] working with your might to redeem the failures of your past life. God has placed you in a world of suffering to prove you, to see if you will be found worthy of the gift of eternal life.⁷

This teaching of the "investigative judgment" is the foundational doctrine and major heresy of Seventh-day Adventism: that the atonement was not complete on the Cross but was begun in heaven in 1844 and depends upon our works. According to EGW, the blood of Christ, instead of making "an atonement for the soul" (Lv 17:11) and "cleans[ing] us from all sin" (1 Jn 1:7), *brought sin into heaven*: "[O]ur sins are, in fact, transferred to the heavenly sanctuary by the blood of Christ."⁸ Thus Christ had to begin the work of cleansing the heavenly sanctuary (*of sins His blood had brought there!*)

through the "investigative judgment." EGW declared that "Ministers who would not accept this *saving message*" were hindering God's work and "*The blood of souls is upon them.*"⁹ Millerites who adopted this delusion became Seventh-day Adventists.

EGW made numerous false prophecies: that "Old Jerusalem never would be built up,"¹⁰ that she would be alive at the Rapture,¹¹ that Christ would return before slavery was abolished,¹² that Adventists living in 1856 would be alive at the Rapture,¹³ and many more. Yet her writings are revered like Scripture. Number 17 of the "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists" states,

The Gift of Prophecy: One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry

But there were false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you.... 2 Peter 2:1

of Ellen G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction.

False prophets continue among us and are often seen and heard on Christian television and radio. For example, toward the end of 1975, Kenneth Copeland prophesied, "As you move into the month of January [1976], you shall see more of the outpouring of God's glory than...in the history of this world...limbs that have been amputated put back on by the power of God...instantly...[bald] men's hair grow to a full head of hair...eyeballs replaced where there were no eyeballs....God will cause your automobile...[that gets] 10 miles to the gallon to get 70 miles...the same old car!" These are but a few of Copeland's false prophecies, to say nothing of his false doctrines.

The false prophecies and "words of knowledge" by those associated with John Wimber and his Vineyard churches would fill several volumes. The laughing revival from Toronto and its latest variation (spreading like wildfire) in the Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, Florida, has spawned a new generation of false prophets. Failure of fulfillment is excused because today's prophets are "different" and errors are normal during the process of learning to become more proficient. Imagine Jeremiah saying, "I'm often wrong, but I'm

improving"!

Benny Hinn is the most popular televangelist/healer today, and many of his false prophecies are documented in The Confusing World of Benny Hinn. (See books offered.) On December 31, 1989, Benny said, "The Lord also tells me...about '94 or '95, no later than that, God will destroy the homosexual community of America...by fire...Canada will be visited with a mighty revival that will start on the west coast of British Columbia...in the next three years." It only takes one false prophecy to make a false prophet, and Hinn's are legion. He can't even get his testimony straight. In PTL Family Devotional he says, "I got saved in Israel in 1968," but in a 1983 message in St. Louis he said, "It was in Canada that I was born again right after '68." Yet in Good Morning, Holy Spirit, he says he was converted in 1972, during his senior year in high school. But he dropped out before his senior year. When was he saved?

For three years, night and day, Paul wept and warned the Ephesian elders of coming apostasy and that some of them would be among its leaders (Acts 20:29-31)! How feeble is our concern for the state of the church in comparison with Paul's! And what was the remedy he offered? Not spiritual warfare, not prayer and fasting, but obedience to God and His Word: "I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace" (v. 32).

There is a growing movement of "prayer and fasting for revival." It sounds so good! But the leaders of this movement refuse to heed God's Word, and promote ecumenism and heresies! We need no revival of that! We need repentance for not heeding God's Word. We need reformation, not revival! There are times when prayer and fasting are wrong. After the defeat at Ai, God told Joshua that prayer was inappropriate because Israel had sinned (Jos 7:10-13). How tragic to have a revival led by false prophets promoting false doctrines!

Not all Seventh-day Adventists embrace EGW's heresies. Pray that SDA leaders will admit to EGW's false prophecies and repent of wrong doctrines. Pray that evangelical leaders will face up to the fact that their ranks are filled with false prophets. Pray for a great outcry against unbiblical doctrines. Pray that today's evangelical leaders will faithfully correct false prophets.

And may the rest of us be faithful in our small spheres of influence. May God help us to love His Word, to meditate upon it day and night, to obey it in our daily lives, and to stand firmly against the perversion of that Word by the false prophets and false teachers of our day. May His Word truly be our guard and guide! TBC

Endnotes

1 *History of the Church* (vol. 2), 182; (vol 5), 336.
2 "Millions Now Living Will Never Die," *The Watchtower* (July 15, 1924), 89.
3 *Watchtower*, Dec. 1941.
4 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 480.
5 Op. cit., 486-490.
6 Op. cit., 483.

7 EGW, *Testimonies for the Church* (vol. 3), 530.
8 EGW, *Spirit of Prophecy* (vol. 4), 266.
9 EGW, *Early Writings*, 234.
10 Op. cit., 75.
11 Op. cit., 15-16.
12 Op. cit., 35, 276.
13 EGW, *Testimonies*, 131-132.