

The Elect Lady & Her Children:
2 John

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Grace Chapel

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK

Author = the apostle John: Determined through comparisons with John, 1 John, and 3 John

John was acknowledged widely as the author by early church writers

Destination: There is no serious reason to question what early church writers say: that the destination is one of the seven churches listed in Revelation 2–3, since western Asia Minor seems to have been John's major sphere of ministry.

The seven churches are: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea

A common inference drawn from Revelation listing Ephesus first is that it was where John had headquartered. If that is correct, it would be likely that both 1 John and 2 John were first delivered to Ephesus, but copies were read and distributed to the other six churches (as was the case for Revelation)

(2 John is a Readers' Digest condensed form of 1 John. Both letters had the same destination)

Date: probably between AD 53 and 57 (when the apostle John temporarily left Asia Minor)

Chronological Summary:

AD 50	John was in the province of Asia, Paul was not allowed to minister there
AD 53–57	John was not in the province of Asia, Paul was allowed to minister there
After AD 57	John returned to the province of Asia, Paul did not return
AD 71	John (exiled to Patmos in the province of Asia) wrote Revelation to the seven churches that had been the focus of his ministry

We do not know when John first went to Asia Minor, but he seems to have been there by AD 50.
Cf. Acts 16:6–11 (July AD 50)

Paul was in Ephesus from 53–56 (Acts 19:1–20) and in May 57 (Acts 20)—Paul’s 3rd Journey

2 John 4 & 12–13 imply that John is away, but 2 John 8 & 12 say that he once worked with them

In Revelation 1:9, John was exiled to Patmos (I date the writing of Revelation in AD 71)

I know that this is an earlier date than is commonly taught in our circles, but note that a date of AD 71 is not early enough to give any comfort to Preterists

(Preterists imagine that Revelation only prophesies events that occurred in AD 70—the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus—so preterists try to argue that Revelation was written before AD 70)

EXPOSITION

John addresses a local church (the elect lady and her children) who are loved by all who love the truth (of Jesus Christ) because that truth abides (in the Church) and will abide forever (1–2)

How do we know that the elect lady is a church, rather than an individual?

1. Scripture often personify groups as a single individual. Cf. Revelation 22:17

2. Note the interchange between singulars and plurals (below) you_s, versus you_p

¹THE ELDER, To the elect lady and her children, whom_p I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth, ² because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: ³ Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

⁴ I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your_s children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father. ⁵ And now I plead with you_s, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you_s, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another. ⁶ This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you_p have heard from the beginning, you_p should walk in it.

⁷ For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. ⁸ [You_p] look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. ⁹ Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰ If anyone comes to you_p and does not bring this doctrine, [you_p] do not receive him into the house and [you_p] are not to greet him; ¹¹ for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.

¹² Having many things to write to you_p, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you_p and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. ¹³ The children of your_s elect sister greet you_s. Amen.

3. V 13 makes more sense if John refers to saints of one local church (from which John writes to another local church) than for him to refer to the elect lady's nephews & nieces w/o extending greetings from the elect lady's sister (would she be dead?)

4. Verse 1 speaks of all who have known the truth loving this elect lady. It makes more sense, if it refers to a local church than to one person a thousand miles from Jerusalem

5. Verse 1 greets *all* the woman's children, but verse 4, speaks of John seeing some of them walking in truth. He does not imply that some were walking in error, but rather that some people from this local church have traveled to Jerusalem(?) and met with John

John speaks of truth abiding in the (universal) church forever

John says that the permanence of this truth (concerning Christ) is the reason for believers from other local churches loving the local church to which John writes

Please observe that this shows that it is legitimate for independent local churches to develop a rapport with each other (while remaining distinct local churches)

John reminds them of the certainty that grace, mercy, and peace in truth and love will be with us from the Father and from Christ (3)

The Majority Text reads *us*, rather than *you*

John speaks of the certainty that grace, mercy, and peace from God will be upon the church, but this will be true in the confines of truth (rather than error) and love (which focuses heavily upon obedience to the truth)

Note the contrast between truth and error in this book

Note the definition of love in verse 6

Note that deceivers (promoters of error) who deny that Jesus has come in the flesh, distort the meaning of loving one another (for them, love is not grounded in truth), so they do not really love the brethren

BODY OF THE LETTER: VERSES 4–11: WALK OBEDIENTLY IN TRUTH BY REJECTING DESTRUCTIVE ERROR

VERSES 4–6: WALK IN THE TRUTH OF THE COMMAND TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER

John rejoices upon seeing people from this church obeying truth commanded by the Father (4)

Verse 5 makes it clear that the command is that given by Jesus in John 13:34–34

How can it be the command of the Father, if Jesus is the One who uttered it?

Link John 12 with John 13

John urges this church to heed the old new-commandment to love one another (5)

John is not charging them with disobeying the command to love one another, because _____

Note that 1 John 2:7–8 makes essentially the same point

Note John 13:34–35 and note the impact that obeying the command is to have

The way that we love God is by obeying His long-standing command to love one another (6)

Remember that truth underlies love (verse 3)

VSS 7–11: THE WAY WE WALK IN TRUTH IS BY REJECTING DESTRUCTIVE ERROR
Many deceptive antichrists undermine the truth (underlying vss 4–6) by denying that Jesus Christ came in the flesh (7)

Note the similarity with 1 John 2:18 and 4:1–3

1 John 2:18

1 John 4:1–3

Observe that these deceivers deny John 20:31

The deceivers may be deceived unbelievers

The deceivers may be deceived believers

The deceivers' message undermines the message that gives eternal life

If Jesus were not the Christ come in the flesh, could He give everlasting life to believers?

Their message undermines the message that gives the abundant life

If Jesus were not the Christ come in the flesh, could He give abundant life to obedient believers?

Believers need to guard against losing a full reward by accepting the deceivers' lies (8)

Observe that John does not speak about losing everlasting life (because it is guaranteed)

Consider John 5:24 and 6:47

Observe that it is possible to lose a full reward.

If it were impossible for Christians to lose reward, this warning would not be here

Observe that losing a *full* reward does not necessarily mean that a person loses *all* reward

Consider 1 John 2:28 (Though not recorded by John, cf. Mark 9:41 also)

Observe that John does not consider it selfish for believers to be motivated towards not losing a full reward. Cf. John 4:36–38; 13:8–11). (Though not recorded by John, cf. Mat 6:19–21 also)

Believers who do not abide in Christ's teaching do not have God (abiding with them) (9)

Cf. John 15:1ff.

A local church should not allow anyone not abiding with Christ to be received into ministry in the church or for the church to encourage them (financially or otherwise), because that would assist evildoing (10–11)

Remember: the elect lady and her children are a local church (not merely a household)

Local churches met in homes in the first century (cf. Philemon 2)

The home of the elect lady would be the assembled church (in a home)

I would urge caution against our personal homes being used in a way that might promote false teaching. However, I do not see a prohibition from allowing an unbeliever to enter my personal home. The passage focuses on a local church not assisting false teachers.

FAREWELL (12–13)

John only discussed the most important issues in this letter, but planned to discuss in person many other issues, with the objective of mutual encouragement (in truth and love) (12)

John's joy would be fulfilled as he saw these believers walking in truth (cf. verse 4)

Their joy would be fulfilled as they walked in truth (cf. verse 4)

The church where John was staying also greeted the church to whom John wrote (13)

CONCLUSION