

John's Letter to the Chosen Lady and Her Children 2 John

2 John 1:1 The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth,

In this first verse we see the letter is written by "the elder." The word means ambassador and usually refers to an older person who is looked upon as a natural leader among the people. In most cases it is an unofficial position of leadership that has been earned through a person's life and reputation. It is from this group of natural leaders that Paul instructed both Timothy and Titus to select the overseer's of the church and the deacons. It was from this group that Jethro recommend that Moses select judges to help manage the people in Israelites in the wilderness.

John the younger, the writer of the gospel of John, 1st John, 3rd John, and the Revelation is credited with writing this short letter. His name is nowhere in the letter but it contains the style, message, and verbiage found in 1st John. Much of this letter is a repeat of 1st John, however, there is at least one important truth that we will discover in this letter that is not found in 1st John. It is like the church had received 1st John only to zealously overstep its instruction.

The letter is written to the "chosen lady and her children." The word "chosen" is translated "elect" in other versions and rightly so. John is writing to the "elect lady" or "chosen lady" that has children. The word "elect" contains the idea that the "lady was selected by God." It further carries the idea that the "lady had no choice in the selection, it was totally God's doing." Now this looks like the lady was predestined by God. "Predestination" and "election" are closely related and are applicable to this passage and text. While John does not address why this is the "elect or chosen" lady, Paul does in his letter to the Ephesians. There Paul explains that the "church" is the chosen "administration" through which the Lord's gospel would be disbursed. It was the organization that was a "mystery to come" in the Old Testament.

Ephes. 1:³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love⁵ He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.⁷ In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace,⁸ which He lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight⁹ He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him¹⁰ with a view to an administration suitable to the fulness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth.

Ephes. 3:⁴ And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,⁵ which in other generations was not made known to the

sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;⁶ to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,⁷ of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power.⁸ To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,⁹ and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things;¹⁰ in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known **through the church** to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.¹¹ This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,¹² in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.¹³ Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory.

The "chosen lady" is the church. But the letter is also addressed to the children. How does the church, a "chosen lady" give birth to "children?" It is through the process called "adoption" as we saw in Ephesians 1:5. We can become part of the predestined "church" through adoption. Adoption is made possible through the gospel of "Whoever will may come."

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Romans 10:13 for "WHOEVER WILL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED."

Therefore it is the children of the Lord who make up the church. So this letter is written as an open letter to all the churches that make up the body of Christ called "the church" in general. It is also written specifically to the individuals who are born spiritually through the ministry of the church. These are the ones that this "elder" loves "in the truth." This love is the Godly love that only is known by knowing God. It is a word not found in classical Greek, but only in the revealed message from God, our Bible. But the elder is not the only one to love the lady and her children; John states that "all who know the truth" also love her and her children. To put this in today's language we would say "All who know the truth found in the Lord Jesus will love the Church!"

1:2 for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever:

John indicates two important aspects about the "truth" they know and the church as a whole must be reminded of continuously.

First, their love (v. 1) is for the "sake of the truth, which abides in us." It is a duty to love for the truth's sake. Christians can not know God's love and not share that same love for their brothers. Notice also where that truth lives! John says the truth "abides" or comes alive "in us." This truth, which is love, is vibrant and living within and emitting from them.

Second, we see that the "love in truth" will be "with us forever." It is not something that will pass away or can be taken from you. It is "forever" and that means eternal! Once you've come to know the true love of God, and once you've experienced the true love of God, and once that true love of God comes alive in you, it is there forever.

1:3 Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

"Grace, mercy and peace" come because of the love of God. Grace is always first because it is the gift from God that we do not deserve. Mercy follows, which is the judgment awarded us even though we are sinners. It is the tender compassion which we do not deserve. The Lord God shows mercy on us. Finally peace follows the other two. There is no true peace without grace. There is no mercy without grace. But because of grace and mercy, true peace can be experienced forever.

These three things come from "God the Father and from Jesus Christ." Grace, mercy, and peace come from them in truth and love." This is the same "truth and love" we can share with others because the Father and Son have shared them with us.

1:4 I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father.

The elder is rejoicing because some of the church's children are "walking in truth" exactly as they were commanded to do "from the Father." But the word "some" indicates that not all are living and walking in the truth and this must be corrected. It will not be corrected by a new commandment but the same old commandment to "love one another." That is how to know if the children of the church are "walking in truth."

1:5 And now I ask you, lady, not as writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another.

The theme so far has been centered on the "love of truth." John started this letter with the theme and will remain true to the theme throughout its entirety. In this verse the purpose for the letter becomes clear. John "asks" the "lady" to get back to the commandment they heard from the beginning. The command was that "we love one another." John penned this same request in 1st John 2:7.

1 John 2:7 Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard.

Here John is saying, "start doing that again." He is also stating that since they have been given this love from God they are to show it by doing it.

1:6 And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.

Do it! Do the love of God. "Walk according to His Commandments." Put your feet into action. Just as you heard from the beginning, you are to "walk in it."

1:7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

Why do you need to walk according to His commandments? The answer is simply because many deceivers have gone out into the world. John covered this in 1 John 2:26.

1 John 2:26 These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you.

These deceivers are affecting you by trying to make you think they are "of" God, belonging to God, and rightful children in the church, but they are liars. They have one major flaw in their belief system. They "do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh." The word "acknowledge" is the same word used in 1 John 2:23. It means to agree with.

1 John 2:23 Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

They do not agree with the message of Jesus Christ. But how can they not acknowledge that Jesus did not come in the flesh? Jesus living on earth in the flesh can be proved in the secular histories of that day, in the writing of Josephus. And how can just not acknowledging that Jesus came in the flesh prove they are not saved? The answer is once again simple. These deceivers taught that all matter was evil and could not be good. Jesus had actually had a physical body. He would thus be evil or have a sinful nature. Therefore, Jesus never took on a physical body; it just "seemed" that way. This goes against the complete divine revelations of God's word from the Book of Genesis to the Book of Revelation. For a sinful man to be able to approach a Holy God, a holy, divine sacrificial action was required by God as His gift to those who "would receive the gift." His gift was His incarnate Son. The problem in this passage is two fold. Not only did they deny that Jesus came in the flesh but they also did not agree that He was the "Christ." Christ means "Anointed One, or Messiah." In their teachings, the Messiah would not take on a body of flesh. Remember to them the flesh was evil and God would not put on evil. John goes on to instruct that these deceivers (1 John 2:19) are the antichrist (1 John 2:18).

1 John 2:18-19 Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us.

The first reference to the "antichrist" is in the singular; however, it is plural in scope as clarified by John in the 1 John 2:18-19 passage. Anyone, in general, who deceives with this

deception, is an antichrist, -singular. These deceivers have not kept the commandment of God to "love one another." Why? It is because they have never known nor experienced the "love" of God which is truth found only in Jesus Christ.

1:8 Watch yourselves, that you might not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.

Watch yourselves! Why? So you will not "lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward." (Our oldest manuscripts only say, "Lose what you have accomplished.") This is not talking about their salvation. Salvation cannot be lost. John is instructing them concerning the rewards that can be received in this life and hereafter. Don't listen to them.

1:9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.

Notice the purpose for the letter, "anyone who goes too far." This means "to step out of line." It is the sin of willfully stepping out of line. This going too far is to "lose ones station or office by transgression." It is not inadvertent or accidental. It is premeditated and planned. It is done by a person on purpose. John continues to say that when you willfully step out of line and do not "abide in the teaching of Christ" you do not have God! Here the word "abide" means to "follow the regulations" or "live within the instructions and guidelines." The guidelines are the teachings of Christ. If you abide by the teachings not only do you have the Son, but you also have the Father.

1:10 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;

John gives a strong instruction to the lady and her children. "Do not receive" anyone into your house who does not bring with them the teachings of Christ. "Don't even give him a greeting." The word "house" is also the word "home." It is used because at this time the church met in homes of individuals. In these early days the church did not build or acquire a stand alone building for the sole purpose of worshiping the Lord. They went to the synagogues on Saturday but on Sunday they worshiped in the home of one of the believers. We are instructed to not let people who have a false teaching, teach in our personal homes. Today that would include the meeting place of the church as well.

1:11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.

"Do not give him a greeting." Don't say farewell, adieu, or even goodbye. Even doing that causes you to participate in "his evil deeds." Show God's love but do not even associate with the deceivers who claim to be of God but do not bring His teachings with them.

1:12 Having 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, that your joy may be made full.

There were many other things to say, but John wants to save those special things to share face to face. Why? So that, "Your joy may be made full!" (In the oldest manuscripts the

word "your joy" is "our joy"). It is a full joy and a full reward which is all based in the commandment, old yet new, to "love one another."

1:13 The children of your chosen sister greet you.

The closing says, "The children of your chosen sister greet you." In other words, all the children of God who are with John send their greeting to the church to which John is writing. He uses the term "sister" because all the churches make up the bride of Christ. As with a husband and wife, while two are individuals, according to God they are one flesh. So too, we are the bride and also part of the body of Christ.