

2 John Chapter 1

2 John 1:1 "The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth;"

“The elder” is the aged apostle John, who according to ancient tradition lived into his nineties.

John uses this title to emphasize his advanced age, his spiritual authority over the congregations in Asia Minor, and the strength of his own personal eyewitness testimony to the life of Jesus and all that He taught (verses 4-6).

“Whom” is plural.

To “Love in the truth” means

- (1) truly, really to love, and
- (2) to love in a fashion consonant with the Christian meaning of that word.

“The truth”:

Which John and others “Have known” is a combination of factual knowledge regarding the Word of God and personal knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The elect lady (whoever she is), is someone or group that believes in the Lord.

The word "elect" tells us that.

The children are not spoken of as elect.

It perhaps, was like Noah and his sons.

Noah pleased God, but the blessing came through Noah to his sons.

The more natural understanding in context is that it refers to a particular woman and her children (i.e. offspring), who were well known to John.

It appears that John knew this lady and her family personally.

He even speaks of loving them.

This seems to be a woman who had Christian influence, because it speaks of others loving her, who loved the Lord.

“Whom I love in the truth”:

The basis of Christian hospitality is the truth (verses 1-3).

John accentuates the need for truth by repeating the term “truth” 5 times in the opening 4 verses.

Truth refers to the basics or fundamentals of the faith that John has discussed in 1 John (sound belief in Christ, obedience, love), as well as the truths expressed in 2 John (e.g. verses 4-6).

Truth is the necessary condition of unity and, as a result, the basis of hospitality.

2 John 1:2 "For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever."

“Truth ... dwelleth in us ...with us for ever”:

This is the cognitive truth of God’s Word (Col. 3:16).

John loves his readers “for the truth’s sake” or “because of the truth,” which likely has reference to the personal presence of Christ (John 14:6).

The cardinal fruit of the Spirit is love (Gal. 5:22).

We know that "truth" in the verse above, is speaking of Jesus Christ who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Jesus does dwell within the believer, and He will never leave us, or forsake us.

He is with us even unto the end.

2 John 1:3 "Grace be with you, mercy, [and] peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love."

“Grace, mercy and peace ... in truth and love”:

These are not common words in John’s writings.

John’s succession from grace to mercy and then peace marks the order from the first motion of God to the final satisfaction of man.

The confines of these threefold blessings are within the sphere of truth and love.

In this greeting he is likely reflecting common usage in Christian circles of the time and area.

God and Jesus Christ are placed on virtually the same level here, since “Son of the Father” is a title that implies equality with the Father. (John 5:18).

John was known as the apostle of love.

Love is the theme in all his writings.

John is speaking a blessing from the Father and the Lord Jesus on this lady and her family.

This is perfectly alright for an apostle to do.

She was undoubtedly of great value to the church, even though her name is not mentioned.

Stephen was not very well known in the Bible, but was one of the first martyrs.

It is not always necessary for someone to be named in the Bible to be of great value to God and the church.

2 John 1:4 "I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father."

“Children walking in truth ... as we have received a commandment”:

The behavior of hospitality involves obedience to the truth (see verses 5-6).

The word “walking” has reference to continual walking in the truth, i.e., making obedience to the truth a habit in One’s life.

“Of thy children”:

This means “some of your children,” that is, some believers in the fellowship or family John is now addressing.

“Walking”:

This is a Jewish idiom for “living.”

John is saying we should “live by the truth,” or live in accordance with God’s revealed word and His will.

Notice that this family was not a Christian in name only, but were walking the Christian life every day.

The fact that they were living their Christianity greatly pleased John.

Probably, this was a family whom John had influenced.

We are all commanded of God to live upright lives.

In fact, if we love Him, we will keep His commandments.

2 John 1:5 "And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another."

“New commandment ... that we love on another”:

John ties the commandment of truth to the commandment of love (1 John 2:7-11; 4:7-12).

The word “love” has reference to practicing love as a habit in one’s life.

Both walking in the truth and in love is the behavior of hospitality. (See 1 John 2:7; 3:11).

Emphasis on love is a hallmark of John’s writings.

In Luke, for instance, the noun or verb form of the word occurs about a dozen times.

But in John’s gospel alone it occurs more than 40 times.

It seems each minister has a message that is uppermost.

John was no exception.

He based love very high on the list.

1 John has a great deal to say about the commandment of God to love Him and our fellow man.

It is not new for John to bring up the subject of love.

2 John 1:6 "And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it."

“This is love, that we walk after his commandments”:

John defines love, not as a sentiment or an emotion, but as obedience to God’s commands.

Those who are obedient to the truth as contained in God’s commandments, the fundamentals of the faith (1 John 2:3-11), are identified as walking in love.

For some, love has little to do with obedience.

Yet John, following Jesus, stresses that to love is to obey (see John 14:15, 21, 23-24; 15:10, 14).

As one of Jesus’ closest disciples, John would have heard the Master raise the question, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

My own way of expressing this is that we must walk in the salvation the Lord Himself has provided for us.

Jesus said; If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

The commandments He was speaking of were in the next Scriptures.

Matthew 22:37-40 "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." "This is the first and great commandment." "And the second [is] like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

If we were to sum up these two commandments in just one word, it would be love.

Walk in love to God and man.

2 John 1:7 "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist."

“Many deceivers”:

In verses 7-11, John gives limits for Christian hospitality.

This is the centerpiece of John’s thought in this epistle and expands the first two points.

Since Satan comes as an angel of light (2: Cor. 11:13-15), believers must be on guard against error by having an intimate acquaintance with the truth.

“Who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh”:

The original language conveys the idea of a habitual denial of the undiminished deity and humanity of Christ.

A biblical Christology maintains that Jesus Christ’s nature was both fully God and fully man with all the implications for the fulfillment of redemptive purposes.

The essence of the severest error in false religions, heresies, and cults is a denial of the true nature of Jesus Christ.

John warns of “deceivers” who deny the incarnation of Christ.

He reminds us that the doctrine of Christ is fundamental to true Christianity.

Deceivers who deny that Christ came “in the flesh” have the spirit of antichrist.

This is one of the key areas where genuine Christianity parts company with false cults.

Cults, inevitably deny the basic Christian belief that Jesus was God the Son who was incarnate in human flesh.

Both the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ are essential to a biblical view of the person and nature of Christ.

The deceivers seem to have been Gnostics, pseudo-Christian individuals who denied that the Son of God had really taken on human flesh (see 1 John 2:18-27; 4:1-6).

John realizes that to attack the doctrine of the Incarnation (Christ's taking on human flesh), is to strike at the very root of Christianity.

These deceivers are probably leaders with a false doctrine who are trying to lead others astray.

A "deceiver" would be pretending to be a Christian, when in reality, he is opposed to God.

Anyone who does not believe Jesus to be Messiah, and in fact, believes that Jesus was not God manifest in the flesh, is of the spirit of the antichrist.

They are opposed to the truth of Christ.

2 John 1:8 "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."

"We lose not those things which we have wrought":

Although a reward is generally promised Christians for hospitality (e.g. Matthew 10:41; 25:40; Mark 9:41), the idea here is of the fullness of a believer's reward for all the good he has done (see 1 Corinthians 3:10-17; 2 Cor. 5:9-10).

A loss of that reward may occur to any believer who does not discriminate fellowship on the basis of adherence to the truth (Col. 2:18-19; 3:24-25).

This is a potent warning.

All the eternal reward one earns by seeing Christ purely, eagerly and effectively in the Spirit can be diminished by any aiding or abetting of false teaching.

The first and third usage of the word "we" should probably be "you" (plural), and that is according to many ancient manuscripts.

It is dangerous for any person, including a believer, to follow teachings contrary to Scripture.

He is saying, be careful to stay with the true gospel you learned from the beginning.

The main message is to gird up the loins of the mind, and then we should not do nor listen and believe a false message.

The danger would be in falling away from God.

2 John 1:9 "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."

John makes Christology the central doctrine of the faith.

“And abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God”:

A failure to be faithful to the fundamental, sound doctrines of the faith (a proper view of the person and work of Christ, love, obedience); marks a person as having never been born again (1 John 2:23; 3:6-10; 4:20-21; 5:1-3).

The word “abide” has the idea of constant adherence and warns that these fundamentals are not open to change or subject to the latest trends or philosophical fads.

This is saying, to have the truth and lose it would be very bad.

This means that we must guard the Truth.

We must continually dwell in the Truth of Christ.

We must not let our salvation slip away believing a lie.

He that endures until the end shall be saved.

We must guard the gospel message, as it was first given to us.

Remain saved, after you get saved.

Verses 10-11

In the early decades of Christianity, local churches were planted and sustained by itinerant preachers and teachers.

For these workers to survive, it was necessary for believers to show hospitality.

However, one had to be sure that he was not aiding and abetting false teachers, that is, those with unorthodox views of the person and work of Christ.

To take such people in, John says, is to endorse their teaching.

John’s command forbids true Christians to actively support the ministry of false teachers.

It is not a prohibition against having non-Christians (e.g. unsaved family members or neighbors), into one's home, unless of course, they are spreading anti-Christian doctrine, and seeking to use one's home as a base of operations!

2 John 1:10 "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into [your] house, neither bid him God speed:"

“Receive him not into your house ... neither bid him God speed”:

John's prohibition is not a case of entertaining people who disagree on minor matters.

These false teachers were carrying on a regular campaign to destroy the basic fundamental truths of Christianity.

Complete disassociation from such heretics is the only appropriate course of action for any genuine believers.

No benefit or aid of any type (not even a greeting), is permissible.

Believers should aid only those who proclaim the truth (verses 5-8).

Our mind is like a computer.

The things we hear are recorded in our brain.

We should not listen to a false message at all.

If you invite these people in, you will remember some of the things they say.

The best policy is to not let them in your house.

To wish them God speed would be blessing them and their false message.

Just get rid of them is the best policy.

Do it with Christian compassion, but get rid of them.

2 John 1:11 "For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

“Partaker of his evil deeds”:

Hospitality to such leaders aids the spread of their heresy and inevitably leaves the impression of sanctioning the teachings of these antichrists (1 John 2:22).

Supreme loyalty to God and His Word alone must characterize the actions of every true believer.

To wish them God speed would be saying, you approved of their message.

You can see that would be an error.

Verses 12-13

The paper was papyrus, writing material made from reeds.

One of the reasons for the brevity of this epistle is that John intends to speak to his readers in person very soon.

2 John 1:12 "Having many things to write unto you, I would not [write] with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full."

“Paper and ink”:

The word “paper” refers to a papyrus sheet.

One Papyrus sheet could contain the whole letter of 2 John. The term “ink” means “black” and refers to a mixture of water, charcoal and gum resin that was used to write.

“Face to face”:

John literally wrote “mouth to mouth” (see Numbers 12:8), where God spoke to Moses “mouth to mouth”.

“That our joy may be full”:

The blessing of hospitality is full joy (verses 12-13).

John uses this same wording (in 1 John 1:4).

When believers uphold the biblical standards for fellowship, the result is genuine joy among believers because the truths of the Word are maintained.

This is just saying that he will not write more, but will come to see her when he can.

This lady is someone John enjoyed being around.

Perhaps, she and her family had been part of John's spiritual family.

2 John 1:13 "The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen."

John (“chosen lady”), addressed (in verse 1), who sent their greetings via John.

“The children of thy elect sister greet thee”:

To this lady the letter was written to, speaks of her children or could refer nieces and/or nephews of the woman.

This tells us that both the lady who the greeting is from, and the lady the letter was addressed to, had children.

They were not nuns, but mothers.

Many married women led their families to the knowledge of God.

2 John Chapter 1 Questions

1. Who are the three possibilities this letter could have been written to?
2. Who does the author tend to believe it was written to?
3. Who is the elder in verse 1?
4. How was the person addressed, that the letter was written to?
5. Were her children spoken of as elect?
6. Who does John say loves this lady?
7. What does the word "elect" tell us?
8. What is the "truth" speaking of in verse 2?
9. What was the blessing John spoke on the lady?
10. John was known as the apostle of _____.
11. What is the theme in all of John's writings?
12. What explanation is given of the Lord Jesus Christ in verse 3?
13. What condition had John found her children in?
14. If we love Him, we will keep His _____.
15. What was the commandment, from the beginning?
16. Verse 6 says, what is love?

17. Who are those that confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh?
18. What warning did he give them in verse 8?
19. We must _____ in the doctrine of Christ.
20. What harsh instruction are we given regarding listening to false doctrines, in verse 10.
21. If you wish the evil one God speed, what have you done?
22. What does the word "children" tell us about the elect lady?