



Investigating the Word of God

Second John



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An Introduction to Second John

The Author of the Book

Although the author does not identify himself by name, the contents of the book support the apostle John as its writer.

He does identify himself as “The Elder.” There are two possible explanations for this term. The writer could have been an elder or bishop in a local church. The other possibility is that he was an aged or older man.

Those to Whom the Book Was Written

The book is addressed to “the elect lady and her children.” There are two possibilities as to what this term means. It could be an actual woman who is a Christian and her children. It may be a local church, most likely in Asia Minor, and those who comprise it.

Robert Gromacki takes the view that it is an actual woman and her children. “The actual Greek words are *eklektei kuriai*. Some identify these two words as a designation of the universal church (cf. Eph. 5:25, 32) or as a personification of an unknown local church...Some have suggested that one of the two words might be a proper name; therefore, she would either be the elect Kuria or the lady Electra. The most plausible explanation is that she was an unknown, saved woman, loved by all who knew her (1, 2). Her children with whom John had any contact were all obedient to the truth (4). Her home apparently housed the congregation of believers in her vicinity (10). She was well known for her hospitality, especially the entertainment of itinerant preachers (10, 11).” (*New Testament Survey*, 377-378)

On the other hand, William S. Deal believes the term refers to a local church. ““The elect lady and her children’ mentioned in the opening words (1:1) probably refers to the church and its members. Note that in verse 5 there is the reference to a person—‘lady’—but in verse 8 the plural form is used ‘Look to yourselves...’ By these references he doubtless refers to the church and its membership as a whole.” (*Baker’s Pictorial Introduction to the Bible*, 413)

The Time and Place of Writing

It is supposed that John was at Ephesus when he wrote this book. It was more than likely written near the end of his life.

“It is generally believed that it was written in the apostle’s last days. There is no information in the epistle itself by which one can fix a date. From the best sources it seems wise to say it may have been written at Ephesus between A.D. 80 and 90.” (Deal, 413)

Why This Book Was Written

Second John is a personal letter dealing especially with gnosticism and its dangers written to confirm the faith of the recipients, to exhort them to walk in love and obedience, and to warn

them of false teachers. It is an exhortation towards continuance in “truth.” Verses four through six deal with the practical aspect of continuing in the truth: walk in love. Verses seven through eleven deal with the doctrinal aspect of continuing in truth: watch against error.

“The purpose of this book appears to have been twofold: (1) to admonish the elect lady, whoever she was—a person, possibly a church meeting in a home, or the entire church itself—to be faithful to sound doctrine and to walk in obedience to God’s commandments, and (2) to warn against false teachers and their evil doctrines. This is still a good and sufficient reason for this epistle’s place in the Bible, for it is needed again today.” (Deal, 413)

An examination of the text of the book shows that it was written to:

- Express joy that many were walking in the truth. (v. 4)
- Exhort to walk in love. (v. 5)
- Warn that false teachers had to be withstood and avoided. (vv. 7-8)
- Affirm that Truth is limited to the Truth of Christ and warn not to go beyond it. (v. 9)
- Adherence to truth meant rejecting fellowship with false teachers. (vv. 10-11)
- Hope to see them face-to-face. (v. 12)
- Send a salutation from fellow Christians. (v. 13)

An Outline of Second John

I. Salutation (1-3)

II. The Request for Reciprocal Love (4-6)

- A. The cause of John's rejoicing. (4)
- B. The basis of the request. (5)
- C. The essence of the request. (6)

III. A Warning Against False Teachers and Apostasy (7-11)

- A. The cause of the warning. (7)
- B. The appeal of the warning. (8)
- C. The explanation of the warning. (9)
- D. The emotional proof of love. (4:7-21)

IV. John's Desire to Visit (12)

Closing: Greetings from the Children of Her Sister (13)

Second John

Keys to This Chapter

Key Passage: Verse 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.”

Key Words

Elder

Elect

Plead

Deceivers

Antichrist

Transgresses

Doctrine

Key Lesson

Questions on the Text

1. Who wrote this book?
2. To whom was this book addressed?
3. Who loved the elect lady?
4. How long will truth abide?
5. What caused the writer to rejoice?
6. What was the new commandment that John had written to the elect lady?
7. What, according to verse six, is love?
8. According to verse seven, what had gone out into the world?
9. Who is the deceiver and an antichrist?
10. According to verse nine:
 - a. Who does not have God?
 - b. Who has both the Father and the Son?
11. What, according to verse ten, did the writer want them not to lose?
12. Who were these Christians not to receive or greet?
13. Who shares in the evil deeds of these deceivers?
14. What, according to verse 12, was John’s hope?
15. Who sent greetings to the elect lady?

True - False

- T F 1. John rejoiced when he found just a few people walking in truth.
- T F 2. A few deceivers have gone out into the world.
- T F 3. The one who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.
- T F 4. One who greets and receives a deceiver does not share in his evil deeds.
- T F 5. John wanted to write more to them using paper and ink.

Discussion Question

How does a person abide in the doctrine of Christ?

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