

The Second Epistle of John

Teaching Conducted At
West Side Church of God in Christ
Rockford, Illinois

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Blessings upon you, people of the most high God! As you prepare to read this brief study, it is my prayer that it will be a blessing to you. This study was conducted on February 22, 2008, at West Side Church of God in Christ in our Friday evening teaching service. I hope this study is a blessing to you and gives you the encouragement you need to dig deeper into the Word of God. I speak blessings into your lives in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Pastor Maurice A. West – February 22, 2008

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN

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There will be various translations of the Scriptures used in our study. If we depart from the King James (or Authorized) Version (public domain in the United States), which will be our standard, what follows are the typical translations used:

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At various times in this study, you may also find the following designations referring to reference material used to assist in putting together this study. Direct quotations will be shown in italicized text.

- {Adam Clarke} Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Whole Bible
- {JF&B} The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary
- {Matthew Henry} Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible in One Volume
- {Dake} Dake's Annotated Reference Bible
- {MacArthur} The MacArthur Study Bible
- {Thompson} The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible.
- {McGee} Thru the Bible Commentary Series by Dr. J. Vernon McGee

If other references, commentators, or Bible translations are used they will be identified in the text.

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN

WRITER: The writer of this book is the Apostle John, the beloved disciple. There really is very little controversy about that.

- {Adam Clarke} “*[In the first verse, John uses the title ‘the Elder.’] This title led some of the ancients to attribute this epistle to a person called John the Presbyter, a member of the Church at Ephesus; and not to John the apostle. But this is a groundless supposition.*”

DATE: From the commentators, we see that this book was written somewhere toward the end of the first century (85-99 A.D.) or more than 60 years after Christ left the earth. There is a little controversy as to whether it was written before or after the Book of the Revelation but it’s clear that it is one of the last books of the Bible to be written.

- {Dake} “*Perhaps written from Ephesus about 90 A.D.*”
- {JF&B} “*Eusebius [an early church father] relates that John, after the death of [Roman Emperor] Domitian, returned from his exile in Patmos to Ephesus, and went on missionary tours into the heathen regions around, and also made visitations of the churches around, and ordained bishops and clergy. Such journeys are mentioned, 2 John 1:12; 3 John 1:10,14. [If] Eusebius is right, both Epistles must have been written after the Apocalypse, in his old age, which harmonizes with the tone of the Epistles, and in or near Ephesus.*”
- {Adam Clarke} “*It should be observed that the date of this epistle is very uncertain. [My] supposition is that it was written about A. D. 85.*”

STATISTICS: {Dake} The Second Epistle of John is the 63rd book of the Bible. It contains 1 chapter and 13 verses. It has no prophecies.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS: {Matthew Henry} “*Here we find a canonical epistle inscribed, principally, not only to a single person, but to one also of the softer sex. And why not to one of that sex? In gospel redemption, privilege, and dignity, there is neither male nor female; they are both one in Christ Jesus. Our Lord himself neglected his own repast, to commune with the woman of Samaria, in order to show her the fountain of life; and, when almost expiring upon the cross, he would with his dying lips bequeath his blessed mother to the care of his beloved disciple, and thereby instruct him to respect female disciples for the future. It was to one of the same sex that our Lord chose to appear first after his return from the grave, and to send by her the news of his resurrection to this as well as to the other apostles; and we find afterwards a zealous Priscilla so well acquitting herself in her Christian race, and particularly in some hazardous service towards the apostle Paul, that she is not only often mentioned before her husband, but to her as well as to him, not only the apostle himself, but also all the Gentile churches, were ready to return their thankful acknowledgments. No wonder then that a heroine in the Christian religion, honored by divine providence, and distinguished by divine grace, should be dignified also by an apostolical epistle.*”

PURPOSE: John wrote this letter to encourage a certain woman and to warn the church against heresy and those that would attempt to deceive the believers.

Chapter 1

{Adam Clarke} “This epistle is more remarkable for the spirit of Christian love which it breathes than for anything else. It contains scarcely anything that is not found in the preceding; and out of the thirteen verses there are at least eight which are found, either in so many words or in sentiment, precisely the same with those of the first epistle.”

Opening and Greeting

*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; **Amplified Bible** THE elderly elder [of the church addresses this letter] to the elect (chosen) lady (Cyria) and her children, whom I truly love--and not only I but also all who are [progressively] learning to recognize and know and understand the Truth.* It’s interesting that this is the only book of the Bible addressed to a woman. Some of the commentators tried to change the “elect lady” to be a church but most of them agree that it was probably written to a woman that John knew. At the time of this writing, John is a very old man. If he wrote it between 85 and 90 A.D., as most seem to agree, all of his peers are now dead by violent deaths. Peter (67-68 A.D.) and Paul (67 A.D.) would have both been dead about 20 years by this time and John was left alone as the elder statesman in the Church. Therefore, his use of the title “Elder” is a fitting description of him. {David Guzik} “*John probably did not name himself, the elect lady, or her children by name because this was written during a time of persecution. Perhaps John didn’t want to implicate anyone by name in a written letter. If the letter was intercepted and the authorities knew who it was written to by name, it might mean death for those persons.*” This woman, whoever she was, was known throughout the church so it was not necessary to call her by name.

John continues the same theme that he used in all of his writings – the Truth. He used this term 47 times in his Gospel and his three epistles. It is what binds the Church of Jesus Christ together. We are not bound by our praise and worship style, our heritage, our denomination, or our ministry “stars” – we are bound together by the TRUTH. Until we accept (again) this principle, we will remain divided by various barriers and throw our allegiance to the wrong ones.

2 For the truth’s sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us forever. Why is the Truth so important (beyond the obvious reasons)? The main reason is its endurance – it shall be with us FOREVER.

What is this “Truth”? The Lord Jesus answered this question for us in His prayer to the Father before going to the cross. **John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy WORD is truth.** So from now on, when you see that word “Truth”, think of the Word of God, not as delivered through the “filters” of people with issues or the teaching of denominations, but just as it reads. When you think of it in that manner, it’s not as easy to “walk in the truth”. Since that may be a shocking statement, let’s take a quick “Truth Quiz”:

- The Truth – **Proverbs 3:6 NLT Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.** Do WE walk in the Truth?
- The Truth – **Luke 6:35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.** These are the Words of the Lord Jesus. Do WE walk in the Truth?
- The Truth – **Luke 6:28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.** More words from the Lord Jesus. (I don’t know about you but this quiz is getting tougher and tougher!) Do WE walk in the Truth?

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN

*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. 4 I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father. **Amplified Bible** I was greatly delighted to find some of your children walking (living) in [the] Truth, just as we have been commanded by the Father [Himself].* Just as today, the elect lady only had “some” of her children that continued to walk in the Truth. Even among those that name the name of Christ, there are only “some” that walk in the Truth.

Encouragement to Walk in Love and the Truth

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. {Adam Clarke} “*The commandment to love one another was what they had heard from the first publication of Christianity, and what he wishes this excellent woman to [instill into] all those under her care. The mode of address here shows that it was a person, not a Church, to which the apostle wrote.*” John is now a church “father” and he writes in that fashion. There are many things that we’re excited about in the church today (just as there have been in times past) but the “basics” are the key. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself gave the church this commandment: **John 13:34-35 34 NKJV A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.** Now it is many years after His return to glory and it’s no longer new but the commandment is still relevant. **SAINT’S PRINCIPLE:** The old apostle turned the people back to the basics that the Lord taught. Our focus must be on the doctrines of the Lord Jesus. He told us to love each other.

*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. **NLT** Love means doing what God has commanded us, and He has commanded us to love one another, just as you heard from the beginning.* {Dake} “*Keeping the commandments of the New Testament is proof of genuine love.*” How can obedience to the commandments be proof of genuine love? Genuine love begins with our love for God. Without this love, you cannot love others. This same apostle told his audience in the prior epistle the same thing. **1 John 5:2-3** *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.*

Warning Against the Spirit of Antichrist

*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. **Message Bible** There are a lot of smooth-talking charlatans loose in the world who refuse to believe that Jesus Christ was truly human, a flesh-and-blood human being. Give them their true title: Deceiver! Antichrist!* Even in that day, the spirit of antichrist was working. That spirit taught that God did not truly become man and walk among us – there was no Emmanuel. When people believed this, it opened the door for other “gods” to take the place of the true and living God. However, if they confess that it is a lie, then every other religion must admit that they have deceived the people to believe a lie and we know that they are not ready to do that. This is a very sinister, dangerous spirit that manifests itself in the religious community.

The spirit of antichrist works to diminish the work and person of Jesus Christ and the absolute essential aspect of that work for personal salvation. In other words, the spirit of antichrist says that there are other ways to heaven besides Jesus Christ. **SAINT’S PRINCIPLE:** Compromise and fellowship with those that don’t believe that there is only ONE way to heaven (through Jesus Christ) cannot be the life of Christians.

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN

This is a difficult statement because of the spirit of antichrist in the land. The spirit of antichrist views this statement as elitist, judgmental, and inflexible – all of the things that the world insists that the Church should not be.

This passage is not speaking of THE antichrist, a particular figure in the Great Tribulation period, but of one operating in the spirit of antichrist. (The Antichrist will operate in the spirit of antichrist but all that operate in this spirit are not THE antichrist.) This spirit works strongly in the world today in such subtle ways as to ridicule Christ, mock the cross, eliminate the power of the blood, and open up other ways to heaven besides through Christ. Even in the Church, we allow ourselves to be deceived (through our own slothfulness) and diminish the importance of Christ's teaching. {From <http://www.allnationsmin.org/> on the Internet} *“The spirit of antichrist is the satanic and worldly influence that subtly seeks to REPLACE Jesus Christ in His Church with some spiritual thing or truth that deceptively is declared to be equal or the same. In other words, the spirit of antichrist is religious by nature. It subtly influences Christian doctrinal emphasis, attitudes and practices by removing Christ. It often succeeds in replacing Jesus Christ with some other good and true spiritual thing. Ministers affected by this spirit will seldom deny that Jesus Christ is extremely important. They think of Christ as the door into salvation but fail to note His centrality to all truth and ministry to Christians. As the content of their public ministries is considered, by emphasis they are really declaring indirectly that something else, some good spiritual thing other than Jesus Christ, will be the salvation of the Church and the world.”* We Pentecostal Holiness people must be careful to not get away from the basics of the Gospel (the birth of Jesus Christ, the God-man by a virgin, the reality of Emmanuel – God with us, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the power of the blood of Jesus, and other such things. (The best Scripture to see the basics of the Gospel is Hebrews 6:1-3.)

8 Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Amplified Bible Look to yourselves (take care) that you may not lose (throw away or destroy) all that we and you have labored for, but that you may [persevere until you] win and receive back a perfect reward [in full]. Now that we understand the working of the spirit of antichrist, we must be careful (look to ourselves) to make sure that we maintain everything that God has given us. How could I lose it? I could lose what I have gained by giving up the gains I have made in Christ due to compromise to the antichrist spirit in the land. Over the years, the Church has worked to become more in touch with the world through our music, through our worship style, and even through cutting back the time allotted for worship. **But every time we touch the world, we lose something of Christ.** Never forget that we're preaching a life changing Gospel, not a lifestyle changing Gospel and only Jesus Christ can change a life. Our enemy is securely settled in the lives we're working to change. **SAINT'S PRINCIPLE: We must not compromise with the spirit of antichrist or we'll have no power against the devil.**

However, there is also a more dangerous part to this verse – the loss of our eternal destiny or rewards. The Apostle Paul said this: **1 Corinthians 3:11-15 NKJV For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.** This passage speaks of the rewards of the saints when Jesus Christ judges His Church. We may find that the Lord is not pleased with

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN

some things we've done and we'll lose a portion of our reward but our destiny in Christ will be settled – we will be saved. (This judgment comes after we're in the presence of the Lord.) The danger comes when our actions impact that destiny, in other words, when we walk away from Christ. The Apostle brings this out clearly in the next verse.

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.* This verse is so important that I want to give it in a number of translations because sometimes we have a tendency to dismiss the King James Version as “old school” and incorrectly translated. Yes, there are some translation errors but none that have impacted the basic doctrines of Christ.

- **NIV** *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.*
- **NJKV** *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.*
- **Message Bible** *Anyone who gets so progressive in his thinking that he walks out on the teaching of Christ, walks out on God. But whoever stays with the teaching, stays faithful to both the Father and the Son.*
- **NLT** *Anyone who wanders away from this teaching has no relationship with God. But anyone who remains in the teaching of Christ has a relationship with both the Father and the Son.*
- **Amplified Bible** *Anyone who runs on ahead [of God] and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ [who is not content with what He taught] does not have God; but he who continues to live in the doctrine (teaching) of Christ [does have God], he has both the Father and the Son.*

There are two contrasts in this verse. On the one side you have the so-called “progressive” thinker who is actually a backslider in disguise. They have moved away from the doctrine of Christ. It's clear in the verses that they did once abide in that doctrine but they transgressed, ran ahead, wandered away, and walked out on Christ. In spite of those that teach to the contrary, John makes it clear that we can be saved and then be lost by our actions. On the other side of this verse is (and this is my prayer) all of us. We are there as long as we abide in, stay with, continue in, remain in, and continue to live in the doctrine of Christ. When we do that, oh, we have a relationship with the Father and the Son. What a tremendous promise!

A Great Warning

10 *If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: 11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.* **Amplified Bible** *If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine [is disloyal to what Jesus Christ taught], do not receive him [do not accept him, do not welcome or admit him] into [your] house or bid him Godspeed or give him any encouragement. For he who wishes him success [who encourages him, wishing him Godspeed] is a partaker in his evil doings.* When I read the various commentators on this verse, what they said did not agree with what the Lord has given me over the years. This is one of the verses I learned early in my salvation (early to mid-70's) when the “glory days” of the Pentecostal Holiness movement was waning. There were many new and progressive teachers in the Church and there were new false christs in the land. Sun Myung Moon was stealing young people across the country. Witness Lee, a companion of Watchman

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN

Nee but a false teacher, was influencing others in his cult. Jim Jones was rising to prominence in California. Televangelism was beginning to explode through Jim Bakker, Jimmy Swaggart, Marvin Glass, W.V. Grant and others who later discredited the name of Christ. In addition, the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormon Church were growing. As a young person and as a young Christian, I needed an answer that would not push away those that embraced the doctrine of Christ while not embracing ANYONE that wanted to diminish His doctrine by one bit at all. I found the answer in this verse.

Let me give you the West Translation of this verse – ***if ANYONE comes to you with teaching and instruction that changes or contradicts the basic teaching of Jesus Christ, don't do ANYTHING that would help that person promote their teaching AT ALL. If you do ANYTHING that helps them, even verbally, you have shared in their evil deed.*** For this reason, I'll give to a cancer fund that I know before I give to a "church" that I don't know. I will take the time to learn their doctrine but if it does not line up with the doctrine of Christ (the "basic doctrines of Hebrews 6 – repentance from dead works, faith toward God, the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment), I will not give them a penny or a "God bless you" because I refuse to be a part of that wickedness. Now this does not mean that I refuse to be kind or nice or try to win them to Christ but I cannot promote false teaching.

Let me warn you that this verse is what everyone that does NOT name the name of Christ hates about us. The battle lines between Christianity and Islam are drawn. The battle lines between Christian heterosexual relationships and homosexual relationships are drawn. The battle lines between the real Christian and the liberal, accepting Christian are drawn. We'll all have to decide soon what side we will choose to be on.

Conclusion and Greeting

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. It's too bad that the Apostle did not give us more but he was probably impacted by his advanced age. However, I love his spirit. He plans to LIVE and is not preparing to leave here as he looks forward to speaking with the elect lady face to face.

13 The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.

I speak blessings into your lives in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and pray that this brief study has been a blessing to you!

