

## LESSON TEN

# THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN

### A. **THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN:**

This epistle is very similar to the third epistle of John. They were personal short letters to friends, which were preserved for the church.

Undoubtedly written on the standard papyrus sheet of that day, each of them would have been one page in length. Both of these short letters were written about the same time and almost certainly were written in Ephesus.

The purpose of this second epistle was to warn against heresy and having fellowship with false teachers. At this particular time in the history of the church, there were many itinerant preachers. These men traveled from church to church living at the expense of the local congregations. Many times they were false teachers who sought to undermine the foundation doctrines. It was against these false teachers that John warned.

### B. **THE ELDER:**

The author of this epistle called himself "the elder." Certainly he was none other than the Apostle John who wrote the gospel, the epistles of John and the book of Revelation.

Elders were church officials who were ordained to minister within a local congregation. The term is not used with this meaning here. The word does not refer to an official but rather to the meaning of the term in the natural sense. The word "elder" here could be translated "the ancient" or "the aged." It is from his position of age and experience that John wrote this epistle. Here we have John, an aged saint, one of the last of the first century Christians. He was one of the last disciples of Christ in the flesh and therein lay his authority to speak.

### C. **THE ELECT LADY:**

John addressed this letter to the "elect lady and her children."

Bible scholars have never been able to settle regarding the identity of this elect lady. There are two interpretations, either one of which may be correct. Both of these are given here although the writer believes that the second one is probably correct.

#### 1. **A LOCAL CHURCH NEAR EPHESUS:**

It is concluded that the elect lady is a church for she is loved by all that have known the truth. This would hardly be true if she were an individual. Also she is addressed in this epistle in the plural.

If she is a church, then her children would be the Christians who worship in the local assembly. Her elect sister would be another local assembly, possibly in Ephesus, where John worshipped.

It must be admitted that this interpretation could be correct for the church is feminine in gender and is the bride of Christ.

## 2. AN UNKNOWN LADY:

The simplicity of the epistle would cause a person to believe that it was addressed to an individual. The Greek here used for lady is "kuria." It was not unknown for this to be a proper name. It is probable that the epistle was written to the elect Kuria.

She would have been a prominent lady, residing near Ephesus, who was well known in the community. Very likely her home was the meeting place of the local church. She had a sister who was now deceased but whose children attended John's congregation. The elect lady's children had apparently visited their cousins and John had become acquainted with them. Having become acquainted with them, John wrote their mother this letter.

## D. THE SALUTATION:

The wording of the salutation is interesting. In other epistles the salutations are given in the form of a prayer. Here the salutation is a statement: *"Grace, mercy and peace will be with us."* John does not pray that they might receive these gifts of the grace of God, he assures them that **THEY WILL** receive them.

## E. LOVE AND TRUTH:

Scriptural Reference:

*"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" (II John 3).*

In this epistle love and truth are closely connected. It is in the truth that the elder loves the elect lady and it is because of the truth that he writes this epistle.

Truth tells us how we should love. "Agape" is the word for Christian love. This love will always seek the highest good of others. It is significant that John writes in love to warn them. The word "truth" is used five times in the first four verses.

## F. WARNING AGAINST THREATENING PERIL: (II John 4-9).

John reminded the lady of the commandment to love one another. In verse 5 the commandment is to love while in verse 6 love is obeying His commands. Love is not just a soft sentimental emotion without direction. Rather love is revealed in a healthy principle, which will cause us to do the right thing.

John now warned the lady against a spreading heresy, which was a denial of the incarnation. He exhorted her to self-examination in verse 8. *"Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought ... "*

He then exhorted her to examine others on the basis of their abiding in the truth. The doctrine of Christ is the truth of the incarnation. Those who deny this truth have not God; those who continue in this truth have both the Father and the Son.

John called those who denied this truth, deceivers. Such a man was both a deceiver and an antichrist.

**G. NO COMPROMISE: (II John 10-13).**

There must be no compromise with false teaching. These false teachers were to be given no hospitality. A refusal of hospitality would help to stop the spread of the heresy. Not only were they not to be invited into the home, but they were not to be given a greeting on the street. Giving a man God speed is to encourage him and to fellowship him in his false teachings.

It would be a false love to invite such a one into our home. For truth's sake, they are to be refused admission. This admonition given to the elect lady is one the church should remember in these lazy days of widespread heresy.

LESSON TEN

SELF HELP TEST

- A. Who was the "elect lady?"
  
  
  
  
- B. Explain the meaning of the word "elder" as used here.
  
  
  
  
- C. Explain the seriousness of denying the incarnation.
  
  
  
  
- D. Write a paragraph explaining the proper attitude and conduct toward false teachers.