

# 2 John

## Introduction and Thanksgiving

1:1 From<sup>1</sup> the elder,<sup>2</sup> to an elect lady<sup>3</sup> and her children, whom I love in truth<sup>4</sup> (and not I alone, but also all those<sup>5</sup> who know the truth), 1:2 because of the truth<sup>6</sup> that resides in us and will be with us forever. 1:3 Grace, mercy, and<sup>7</sup> peace will be

<sup>1</sup> **tn** The word “From” is not in the Greek text, but has been supplied to indicate the sender of the letter.

<sup>2</sup> **tn** Or “presbyter.”

**sn** The author’s self-designation, *the elder*, is in keeping with the reticence of the author of the Gospel of John to identify himself. This is the same self-designation used by the author of 3 John.

<sup>3</sup> **tn** This phrase may refer to an individual or to a church (or the church at large). Some have suggested that the addressee is a Christian lady named “Electa,” but the same word in v. 13 is clearly an adjective, not a proper name. Others see the letter addressed to a Christian lady named “Kyria” (first proposed by Athanasius) or to an unnamed Christian lady. The internal evidence of 2 John clearly supports a collective reference, however. In v. 6 the addressee is mentioned using second person plural, and this is repeated in vv. 8, 10, and 12. Only in v. 13 does the singular reappear. The uses in vv. 1 and 13 are most likely collective. Some have seen a reference to the church at large, but v. 13, referring to “the children of your elect sister” is hard to understand if the universal church is in view. Thus the most probable explanation is that the “elect lady” is a particular local church at some distance from where the author is located.

**sn** 2 John is being written to warn a “sister” church some distance away, referred to as *an elect lady*, of the missionary efforts of the secessionist false teachers (discussed in 1 John) and the dangers of welcoming them whenever they arrive.

<sup>4</sup> **tn** The prepositional phrase ἐν ἀληθείᾳ (*en alētheia*) in 2 John 1 is similar to 3 John 1, although it is not qualified there as it is here (see 3 John 1). This is not merely the equivalent of an adverb (“truly”), but is a theological statement affirming the orthodoxy of Gaius, to whom the letter is addressed. “Truth” is the author’s way of alluding to theological orthodoxy in the face of the challenge by the opponents (see 1 John 3:19).

<sup>5</sup> **sn** *All those who know the truth* refers to true Christians who are holding fast to the apostolic Christology in the face of the secessionist opponents described in 1 John.

<sup>6</sup> **tc** The prepositional phrase that begins v. 2, διὰ τὴν ἀλήθειαν (*dia tēn alētheian*, “because of the truth”), is missing in a number of significant mss, among them Ψ 614 1241 1505 1739 *al*. However, it looks to be a simple case of homoioteleuton, for v. 1 ends with τὴν ἀλήθειαν. For some of these mss it could be an intentional omission, for the sense of the passage is largely the same without the prepositional phrase (the following adjectival participle, in this case, would simply attach itself to the previous τὴν ἀλήθειαν). The phrase could thus have been viewed as redundant and for this reason expunged from the text.

**sn** While *truth* certainly has a doctrinal aspect in this context, the following phrase *that resides in us and will be with us forever* suggests more than doctrine is involved. A close parallel is John 14:16-17 where Jesus promised his disciples that the Spirit (Paraclete) would be with them forever: “He remains with you and will be in you.” The “truth” the author speaks of here is a manifestation of the Spirit of Truth who is permanently with the believer.

<sup>7</sup> **tn** “And” is not in the Greek text. It is supplied for smooth-

ness in English.

with us from God the Father and from<sup>8</sup> Jesus Christ the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

1:4 I rejoiced greatly because I have found some<sup>9</sup> of your children living according to the truth,<sup>10</sup> just as the Father commanded us.<sup>11</sup>

## Warning Against False Teachers

1:5 But now<sup>12</sup> I ask you, lady (not as if I were<sup>13</sup> writing a new commandment<sup>14</sup> to you, but the one<sup>15</sup> we have had from the beginning),<sup>16</sup> that<sup>17</sup> we love one another. 1:6 (Now this is love: that we walk<sup>18</sup> according to his commandments.) This is the commandment, just as you have

ness in English.

<sup>8</sup> **tc** Most witnesses, including some early and important ones (Ⲛ P 33 ⲛ sy), have κυρίου (*kurioi*, “Lord”) before Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (*Iēsou Christou*, “Jesus Christ”), but this is a typical scribal addition, motivated by pietistic and liturgical concerns. Further, early and excellent mss (A B Ψ 048 0232 81 323 1739 *al*) lack κυρίου. Thus, both internally and externally, the shorter reading is strongly preferred.

<sup>9</sup> **tn** “Some” is not in the Greek text, but is supplied because the prepositional phrase beginning with ἐκ (*ek*) has partitive force. The partitive force of the prepositional phrase here has been taken by some interpreters to mean that the author has found some of the elect lady’s children who are living according to the truth and some who are not. This is grammatically possible, but the author has merely stated that he knows of some Christians in the church addressed who are “walking in the truth.” He does not know for certain that all of them are, and concern over this is probably part of the motivation for writing the letter.

<sup>10</sup> **sn** *Living according to the truth* (Grk “walking in [the] truth”). The use of the Greek verb περιπατέω (*peripateō*) to refer to conduct or lifestyle is common in the NT (see 1 John 1:6, 3 John 3-4, as well as numerous times in Paul. Here the phrase refers to conduct that results when a person has “truth” residing within, and possibly alludes to the indwelling Spirit of Truth (see 2 John 2). In the specific context of 2 John the phrase refers to true Christians who are holding fast to an apostolic Christology in the face of the secessionist opponents’ challenge to orthodoxy.

<sup>11</sup> **tn** Grk “just as we received commandment from the Father.” The idiom “we received commandment from the Father” means the Father gave (a) commandment to them (the author plus the recipients).

<sup>12</sup> **tn** The introductory καὶ νῦν (*kai nun*) has some adversative (contrastive) force: The addressees are already “living according to the truth” (v. 4) but in the face of the threat posed by the opponents, the author has to stress obedience all the more.

<sup>13</sup> **tn** The words “if I were” are not in the Greek text, but are supplied for clarity in English.

<sup>14</sup> **sn** An allusion to John 13:34-35, 1 John 2:7-8.

<sup>15</sup> **tn** “The one” is not in the Greek text. It is supplied for clarity in English.

<sup>16</sup> **sn** See 1 John 2:7.

<sup>17</sup> **tn** The ἵνα (*hina*) clause indicates content.

<sup>18</sup> **tn** Or “that we live.”

heard from the beginning; thus<sup>1</sup> you should walk in it.<sup>2</sup> 1:7 For<sup>3</sup> many deceivers have gone out into the world, people who do not confess Jesus as<sup>4</sup> Christ<sup>5</sup> coming in the flesh.<sup>6</sup> This person is the deceiver and the antichrist!<sup>7</sup> 1:8 Watch out, so that you do not lose the things we have worked for,<sup>8</sup> but receive a full reward.<sup>9</sup>

1:9 Everyone<sup>10</sup> who goes on ahead and does not remain<sup>11</sup> in the teaching of Christ<sup>12</sup> does not

have God.<sup>13</sup> The one who remains in this teaching has both the Father and the Son. 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 any greeting.<sup>14</sup> 1:11 because the person who gives him a greeting shares in his evil deeds.<sup>15</sup>

### Conclusion

1:12 Though I have many other<sup>16</sup> things to write to you, I do not want to do so with<sup>17</sup> paper and ink,<sup>18</sup> but I hope to come visit you and speak face to face,<sup>19</sup> so that our joy may be complete.<sup>20</sup>

1:13 The children of your elect sister greet you.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>1</sup> **tn** The ἵνα (*hina*) clause indicates result, parallel to John 13:34 where the final ἵνα clause also indicates result.

<sup>2</sup> **tn** Or “should live in obedience to it.”

<sup>3</sup> **tn** Technically this ὅτι (*hoti*) clause is subordinate to the verb περιπατήτε (*peripatēte*) at the end of v. 6, giving the reason why the readers should walk in the commandment to love one another. But BDF §456.1 notes that subordination “is often very loose” in such cases and can be translated “for.” Thus the ὅτι assumes something of an inferential sense, drawing an inference based on what has preceded.

<sup>4</sup> **tn** “As” is not in the Greek text. It is supplied for clarity in English, since (like in the same confession in 1 John 4:2) Ἰησοῦν (*Iēsoun*) should be understood as object and Χριστόν (*Christon*) as complement of an object-complement double accusative construction.

<sup>5</sup> **tn** Or “Messiah.”

<sup>6</sup> **tn** This is the same confession as in 1 John 4:2 except the perfect participle used there is replaced by a present participle (ἐρχόμενον, *erchomenon*) here. It is not clear why the author changed from a perfect participle in 1 John 4:2 to a present participle here. The perfect participle suggests a reference to the incarnation (past). The present participle could suggest a reference to the (future) second advent, but based on the similarity to 1 John 4:2 it is probably best to take it as referring to the incarnation.

<sup>7</sup> **tn** The statement *This person is the Deceiver and the Antichrist!* is a metaphor (metonymy). The author does not mean that each individual is to be identified as the Antichrist. The opponents are compared to the Deceiver (Satan) and the Antichrist since they are accomplishing Satan’s work and preparing the way for the Antichrist.

<sup>8</sup> **tn** The *things we have worked for* probably refers to the pastoral and missionary efforts undertaken by the recipients of the letter in their own community and surrounding communities. This work would be “lost” if the opponents with their false teaching are allowed to proselytize unopposed.

<sup>9</sup> **tn** The idea of a *reward* for Christians who serve faithfully is not common in the Johannine writings, but can be found in Rev 11:18 and 22:12.

<sup>10</sup> **tn** The construction πᾶς ὁ (*pas ho*) + participle occur frequently in 1 John (13 times) where it is used by the author to divide people into categories: “everyone who does this” as opposed to “everyone who does the opposite.”

<sup>11</sup> **tn** Here μένω (*menō*) has been translated “remain” rather than “reside” since a change in status or position is present in the context: The opponents did not “remain” but “ran on ahead.” The verb μένω is used only here (twice in this verse) in the Johannine letters in connection with “teaching” but in the Gospel of John it is used three times with reference to the teaching of Jesus himself (7:16, 17; 18:19).

<sup>12</sup> **tn** The genitive τοῦ Χριστοῦ (*tou Christou*, “of Christ”) is difficult because it may be understood as objective (the teaching about Christ), subjective (Christ’s own teaching), or both (M. Zerwick’s “general” genitive [*Biblical Greek* §§36-39]; D. B. Wallace’s “plenary” genitive [*ExSyn* 119-21]). An

objective genitive (with Christ as the object of the “apostolic” teaching) might seem to be the obvious reading in context, especially since verse 7 makes reference to what a person “confesses” about Jesus Christ. A good case can also be made for a subjective genitive, however, since other Johannine uses of the genitive following the noun διδασχῆ (*didachē*, “teaching”) favor a subjective sense here. In John 7:16, 17 Jesus himself refers to “my teaching” and “teaching from me,” and 18:19 refers to “his (Jesus’) teaching.” Rev 2:14, 15 refers to the “teaching of Balaam” and “the teaching of the Nicolaitans,” both of which are clearly subjective in context. In the present context, to speak of “Christ’s teaching” as a subjective genitive would make Christ himself (in the person of the indwelling Spirit) the teacher, and this is consistent with the author’s position in 1 John 2:27 that the community does not need other teachers. In 1 John 2:27 it is the Paraclete, referred to as “his anointing,” who does the teaching. Since the dispute with the opponents concerns the salvific significance of the earthly life and ministry of Jesus, the “teaching” here would refer to Jesus’ own teaching (reflected in the Gospel of John) concerning his person and work. Since this is ultimately one with the apostolic eyewitness testimony about Jesus, it is perhaps best to view the genitive here as both objective and subjective (perhaps the author deliberately intended not to be specific).

<sup>13</sup> **tn** The idiom translated *have God* means to have a relationship to God as a genuine believer. The phrase *has both the Father and the Son* later in this verse should be understood the same way.

<sup>14</sup> **tn** *Do not give him any greeting* does not mean to insult the person. It means “do not greet the person as a fellow Christian” (which is impossible anyway since the opponents are not genuine believers in the author’s opinion).

<sup>15</sup> **tn** *Shares in his evil deeds*. Giving a public greeting could be understood by an onlooker to suggest agreement with the (false) teaching of the opponents and is thus prohibited by John.

<sup>16</sup> **tn** “Other” is not in the Greek text but is supplied for clarity in English.

<sup>17</sup> **tn** *Grk* “by means of.”

<sup>18</sup> **tn** Presumably the author means he would rather say the additional things he wants to say to the recipients in person rather than by letter (*with paper and ink*).

<sup>19</sup> **tn** *Grk* “speak mouth to mouth,” an idiom for which the English equivalent is “speak face to face.”

<sup>20</sup> **tn** *Grk* “be fulfilled.”

<sup>21</sup> **tc** The Byzantine text has ἀμήν (*amēn*, “amen”) at the conclusion of this letter. Such a conclusion is routinely added by scribes to NT books because a few of these books originally had such an ending (cf. Rom 16:27; Gal 6:18; Jude 25). A majority of Greek witnesses have the concluding ἀμήν in every NT book except Acts, James, and 3 John (and even in these books, ἀμήν is found in some witnesses). It is thus a predictable variant. Further, the particle is lacking in excellent, early, and diffuse witnesses (N A B P Ψ 33 81 323 1739 1881 *al* *co*), rendering its omission the strongly preferred reading.