

## The New Testament, Book 24

### II John

The little book of II John appears to be a letter to a distinguished lady (the Greek word rendered here as “lady” is *kuria*, the feminine form of *kurios*, “lord”), and to her children. She and her children are known and loved by John. In the closing verse, John sends greetings from the children of the distinguished lady’s sister.

It is possible that the letter is addressed to a church and its congregation, with greetings from a sister congregation, and that John’s wording is figurative or metaphorical. The wording and tone of verses 5 through 9 sound like a letter written to a church. In light of the use of the Greek, *kuria*, however, and the personal tone of the opening and closing verses of the letter, the former interpretation seems much more likely.

And, although I have never seen it suggested by any other interpreter, a third interpretation is possible: John may have been writing to a friend, knowing that it would also be copied and read by the churches of his day. After all, is that not what we are doing right now?

However, no matter to whom it was addressed when John wrote it, it is a letter from God to all of us today.

**A. Author.** The human author of this brief epistle is John, the “apostle of love,” who also wrote the gospel that bears his name, I and III John, and Revelation.

**B. Place and Date.** This brief epistle, along with his other two epistles and his gospel, was probably written from Ephesus, ca 80-90 AD.

**C. Theme.** The theme is two-fold: a message of encouragement; and a crystalline condensation of the doctrinal statements of I John. It is also interesting that the word “truth” appears five times in the first four verses; perhaps “truth” should be added to the theme, making it three-fold.

**D. Highlights.** Highlights of II John include the following:

1. Love One Another. (Verses 1-5)

John expresses his joy over finding that the lady’s children are walking in truth, in that love commanded by the Father. He states that this is not a new commandment, and that its outworking is simply that we love one another.

**NOTE:** Where the AV/KJV reads in v 4, “...I found of thy children walking in truth...,” most modern versions insert a word before “of,” so as to say “*some* of your children” or “*certain* of your children.” In the Greek NT

*there is no word between “found” and “of”; this is true of both the Textus Receptus and the modern Greek NTs in the Westcott-Hort tradition. The AV translators simply rendered the Greek as it is. It seems to me that something is lost in adding such a negative word, for it clearly implies that some of her children are walking in error and sin, which would be out of harmony with the joyful overall tone of the greeting.*

2. Walk in God’s Commandments. (verse 6)

The *agape* love that the Spirit has implanted within us expresses itself in walking in God’s commandments. And, he reminds us, the commandment is not new; in fact, we have had it from the beginning. He tells us, as we have learned, to walk in it.

3. Guard Against Deceivers. (Verses 7-8)

Reminding us that many false teachers, claiming to be Christians but who are in reality deceivers, will try to mislead us. Such imposters, he says, are the antichrists, of whom he has warned us already. The hallmark doctrinal error of these deceivers is that they deny the incarnation: that Christ came to Earth as Jesus of Nazareth, in the flesh. It will be that same old heresy of Gnosticism. Take care, he says, that we not lose what we have worked for in growing and maturing as believers. It is his desire for us that we receive from the Lord our full reward.

4. You Can’t Have the Father Without the Son. (Verse 9)

Here John restates the basic fact of life expressed in I John 2:23: it is that we can’t have the Father without the Son (a basic fact of spiritual life rejected by Unitarians and others). Anyone, he says, who adds to, takes away from, or rejects the doctrine of Christ has no redeeming relationship with God. What could be more serious?!?

On the other hand, he says, those who accept, believe and abide in the doctrine of Christ have both the Father and the Son.

**NOTES:**

1. *“The doctrine of Christ” is simply that which is expressed so succinctly in John 3:16--that God the Son came to Earth as the Christ, God’s Anointed One, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, to fulfill all of the messianic prophecies and be the means of reconciliation between lost and sinful mankind, and our Holy God. But, here, there is added meaning; the Greek word translated “doctrine” is, literally, “teaching(s),” i.e. all the things that Jesus said and taught.*

*2. Unitarians and others who reject the claims of Jesus cannot be the children of God; that is simple, and profoundly important. Without Him, as the Haitian preacher boldly proclaimed, they are doomed<sup>1</sup>.*

*However, I really don't have any idea how God will deal with United Pentecostals, a world-wide, zealous, cultic Christian denomination. Sometimes called "Jesus only Pentecostals," or "oneness Pentecostals," these zealots vehemently reject the doctrine of the Trinity and praying in the Triune Name, teaching that those who do (Trinitarians-- i.e. the rest of us) will go to Hell. They explain away the Trinity by saying that the name of the Father is Jesus, the name of the Son is Jesus and the name of the Holy Spirit is Jesus. How and why they could feel so strongly about this bewilders me; but I suspect that, like all over-zealousness concerning a doctrine, there is something demonic going on. For more on the danger of falling in love with such a doctrine, see "**One Night in St. Louis**" within "**Falling in Love with a Doctrine: an Insidious Trap**" in Part IV (Selected Topical Summaries).*

5. Do Not Entertain or Bless These Deceivers. (Verses 10-13)

John says that we are not to entertain these antichrist deceivers in our homes, let alone wish them "God speed" when they leave. And then he issues an extremely serious warning: it is that if we show respect for such a deceiver, or encourage and bless him in his error, we become partakers in his evil deeds. This means that we would be just as guilty as he is. What could be more serious?

In closing his brief epistle, John says that there are many more things that he desires to discuss, but will write no more because he hopes to see the lady and enjoy her fellowship, face to face. And then, sending greetings from "the children of thy elect sister," he closes the letter.

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<sup>1</sup> See the study guide to I Jn 5:12.