

THE SECOND LETTER OF JOHN



An Explanation of This Letter
Especially for You

Ger de Koning

**ROCK
SOLID**
11

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Especially for You

Rock Solid #11 (Part II)

Ger de Koning

The original Dutch version is available at

Webshop: www.uitgeverijdaniel.nl

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Layout: Jan Noordhoek

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Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible

Old Testament

Gen – Genesis

Exo – Exodus

Lev – Leviticus

Num – Numbers

Deu – Deuteronomy

Jos – Joshua

Jdg – Judges

Rth – Ruth

1Sam – First Samuel

2Sam – Second Samuel

1Kgs – First Kings

2Kgs – Second Kings

1Chr – First Chronicles

2Chr – Second Chronicles

Ezra – Ezra

Neh – Nehemiah

Est – Esther

Job – Job

Psa – Psalms

Pro – Proverbs

Ecc – Ecclesiastes

Song – Song of Songs

Isa – Isaiah

Jer – Jeremiah

Lam – Lamentations

Eze – Ezekiel

Dan – Daniel

Hos – Hosea

Joel – Joel

Amos – Amos

Oba – Obadiah

Jona – Jonah

Mic – Micah
Nah – Nahum
Hab – Habakkuk
Zep – Zephaniah
Hag – Haggai
Zec – Zechariah
Mal – Malachi

New Testament

Mt – Gospel of Matthew
Mk – Gospel of Mark
Lk – Gospel of Luke
Jn – Gospel of John
Acts – Acts of the Apostles
Rom – Letter to the Romans
1Cor – First Letter to the Corinthians
2Cor – Second Letter to the Corinthians
Gal – Letter to the Galatians
Eph – Letter to the Ephesians
Phil – Letter to the Philippians
Col – Letter to the Colossians
1Thes – First Letter to the Thessalonians
2Thes – Second Letter to the Thessalonians
1Tim – First Letter to Timothy
2Tim – Second Letter to Timothy
Tit – Letter to Titus
Phlm – Letter to Philemon
Heb – Letter to the Hebrews
Jam – Letter of James
1Pet – First Letter of Peter
2Pet – Second Letter of Peter
1Jn – First Letter of John
2Jn – Second Letter of John
3Jn – Third Letter of John
Jude – Letter of Jude
Rev – Revelation

Explanation of general format

PERSONAL PRONOUNS are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

BRACKETS [] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

SHARP BRACKETS < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

When **ASTERISKS** * are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

ALL CAPS in the New Testament quotations are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

The Second Letter of John

Introduction

The second and third letter of John are closely connected to his first letter and are as much inspired as the first. These are two brief letters. This may make them seem of lesser importance. He who thinks that, is very mistaken. They are of fundamental importance to us just as the first letter; we cannot do without these letters. Their spiritual power is not in firm language, but in the simple terms. As well as in his first letter and that is also typical for the gospel that he wrote) John does not use many words and also not difficult words. But that what he writes is very profound.

In these two brief letters you do not get to hear any new truths. It's about the same themes as in the first letter. Also here it is about *truth* and *love*, which both appear together in these two letters approximately ten times. But who will know the truth (the Lord Jesus is the truth) and the love (God is love) in their full extent? The more you ponder on it, the more you come to the conviction of their infinity. Nevertheless, in both letters John finds a way to bring truth and love that close, that you will recognize their value. Through these letters you get examples of how you in your faith life can live up to the teaching of the first letter.

The two letters go hand in hand, they complement one another. The primary subject of the second letter is the false teachers, while the third letter is about the true workers of God. The second letter shows how you ought to deal with people who bring a false teaching. You must reject them, you should not even greet them. The third letter shows how your attitude ought to be toward people who bring the truth. You must receive them in all love, welcome them and help and support them in their work.

The second letter deals with the danger that you do not expose the false teacher and have fellowship with him, even if only by a greeting. That danger is greater for women, and for this reason the second letter is addressed to a woman. Therefore, in case you are a sister, you ought not to leave the discernment of a false teacher to certain brothers.

The opposite danger is that one of the third letter. That danger is that you do not recognize the teacher that comes with God's truth and do not show him hospitality. That danger is greater for men, because hospitality is not something just of sisters. Generally, men are more selfish and less inclined to be hospitable. They also see competition much faster. It is not for nothing that they are exhorted to receive the true worker not with suspicion, but by welcoming and supporting him.

The message of both letters is that you have to discern what a teacher preaches. You should not be misled in this to discern by the importance or impressiveness of the gift or an appointment or training or degrees. The only criterion is whether a person brings the truth or not. Briefly said, you are to reject those who do not bring the truth and receive those who do bring the truth. It is always necessary to test the teaching a person brings. If he brings the sound teaching, you should welcome him. A woman or man who possesses the Word, like for instance these letters, is able to judge his teaching and is also responsible to do that.

Both letters are not addressed to believers in general, like the first letter, but to individual believers. Added to that the second letter is also addressed to children. They also are responsible to recognize and reject a false teaching. It is not about them to be able to analyze false teaching. The point is that they are able to discern the voice of the good Shepherd from the voice of the false shepherds. They should always be radical about that.

The woman and the children are to know that they should not even greet a person who approaches them with a false teaching, not even out of politeness. They are to take a clear stand toward the evil and the false teaching. In this letter we will pay attention to what that false teaching is. There is no letter in the New Testament that explains more clearly how to deal with false teachers than this second letter of John. That surely underlines the significance of this letter.

Division of the letter

At the end of this introduction a division of the letter. It can be divided in different ways, but I find the following division the best and clearest:

1. Salutation of the apostle: grace, mercy, peace (2Jn 1:1-3).

2. Joy of the apostle: obedient children (2Jn 1:4).
3. Admonition of the apostle: walking in love (2Jn 1:5-6).
4. Care of the apostle: antichristian deceivers (2Jn 1:7-11).
5. Hope of the apostle: to meet each other soon (2Jn 1:12-13).

2Jn 1:1-2 | Sender and Recipients

1 The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth, 2 for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever:

V1. The author, John, presents himself, without mentioning his name, to the readers as “the elder”. That means that he is of a respectable age and writes this letter as an experienced believer. He does not write as an apostle, although he is an apostle. Herein you taste the heart of the shepherd who is worried about the sheep of the flock of the Lord Jesus.

In this letter, which includes the warning to beware of the antichristian teaching, he addresses “the chosen lady and her children”. That is not without reason. A woman easily lets herself be deceived, as it already happened in paradise (1Tim 2:14). Sin entered the world because satan deceived Eve. Paul is talking about false teachers who approach women in particular (2Tim 3:6-7). Sect leaders often visit the households at daytime when husbands are regularly not at home. Children may also open the door. That is why they are also warned about the deceivers in this letter.

John calls the lady “chosen”. How can he know that? Not because he has looked in the books of God, but because her life is an open book. Her life testifies that she is a believer and therefore a chosen one (cf. 1Thes 1:4-5). By addressing her with these words, he expresses his respect for her, without falling into flattery. It must have been encouraging for her and have made her happy. Doesn't it make you happy if someone says that it can be seen in your life that you are a Christian? It is nothing to be proud of, but you may accept it in gratitude and as an encouragement from the Lord.

It is not unthinkable that the chosen lady is a widow. No husband is being addressed or mentioned. If there was one it would have been impolite and discourteous to address her and ignore him. After all, the husband is the head of the family. It is also important to note that John carefully avoids the word ‘beloved’ in this letter. He uses this term in the first and the third letter. He does not do that here to exclude wrong thoughts about his relationship to her. He also addresses the children and makes them share in his love.

His love for the lady and her children is a love “in truth”. To love in truth means that it is a truthful love, a love without unspiritual ulterior motives. It is a love which is being carried and surrounded by truth. “All who know the truth” share in his love toward her. To know the truth means to know God, just as He has revealed Himself in Christ. The Lord Jesus is the truth about and concerning God (Jn 14:6-10). Also the Spirit is the truth (1Jn 5:6). Through the Spirit we learn to know the full truth of Who God is. He who knows the truth also loves the brethren, for they are also of the truth.

V2. The love of John is not only truthful, in truth (verse 1), but his love is also “for the sake of the truth”. His love does not only express itself in acting truthfully, acting out of the truth, but it is at the same time an acting that testifies of the truth. That acting upholds the truth.

The truth, John says to the lady and her children, abides in us. By that he indicates that Jesus Christ, Who is the truth, abides *in* you. He will also be *with* you forever. You have received Him as your life. John clearly showed that to you in his first letter. You will never ever lose that life. At the same time it is a life that is with you. Therefore you will always have Him as a Person, as the Object of your admiration, with you (Mt 28:20; cf. Jn 14:16-17).

Now read 2 John 1:1-2 again.

Reflection: What is the issue of this letter? Why has it been written to a lady and her children?

2Jn 1:3-7 | Walking In Truth and Love

3 Grace, mercy [and] peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. 4 I was very glad to find [some] of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment [to do] from the Father. 5 Now I ask you, lady, not as though [I were] writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another. 6 And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it. 7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ [as] coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

V3. In the two letters addressed to Timothy, thus also to a person, you also came across the words “grace, mercy [and] peace” (1Tim 1:2; 2Tim 1:2) in the greeting. Only, there it is more a wish, while here it is given as an assurance, “will be with us”. It is also not something that John determines for the lady and her children only, but also for himself, which you can derive from the word “us”.

“Grace” is a wonderful expression of the love of God that gives assurance. God shows grace without being asked for it. Divine love reaches out in grace to people without hope. “Mercy” has got more to do with the circumstances in which you desperately need God’s compassion. It is the personal compassion of God in your life on earth, providing for personal needs in times of weakness and trials. A direct result of knowing the grace and mercy of God is that you have “peace” in your heart in the circumstances in which you are.

These three blessings come from Divine Persons Who are presented in a special way and Who are related to each other in a special way. This is what makes it so rich and solid. The word “from” is read both before ‘God the Father’ and before ‘the Lord Jesus Christ’. This shows the equality of the two Divine Persons. With ‘God the Father’ you feel safe. With ‘the Lord Jesus Christ’ – He is mentioned here by His full name – you think of three relationships in which you stand to Him:

1. He is your ‘Lord’, that is the One Who has authority over you;

2. He is also 'Jesus', that is the Man on earth Who has redeemed you from your sins (Mt 1:21);

3. He is also 'Christ', that is He in Whom God has found all His pleasure and in Whom you are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places (Eph 1:3).

An extra additional special feature is the designation "the Son of the Father". That appears only here in the New Testament. This name fully harmonizes with the character of this letter, in which it is all about the most important truth about His Person. The Son is fully God and fully Man and He is also the Eternal Son. The Lord Jesus is the Son of the Father. There is only one Son and only one Father. That is the truth. Everything that contradicts that is a lie. All truth of the letters of John has this truth as a center and starting point.

The end of the greeting, "in truth and love", indicates the relational sphere that is enjoyed between John and the lady and between the believers. There are no dishonest or obscure and deceitful elements in it. Where truth ignores love, the heart grows cold and knowledge is only head knowledge. Where love is at the expense of the truth, it is a love that has got nothing to do with God's love, but it has degenerated into a human, carnal emotion.

V4. John expresses his great joy over some children of the lady, who, it seems, no longer live at home. It seems that John has met them somewhere else. This testimony of her children must have encouraged the mother too. All her efforts had been focused on convincing them of the truth and to make them walk in it. Her efforts apparently have borne fruit, for now they have moved they show the effect of what they have inherited from home. She must have had just as many worries about her children who live away from home, as Job had long ago (Job 1:5). What John is telling her is the reward for her faithfulness of sowing the seed in the hearts of her children. It shows her attitude toward her children.

What is previously said does not necessarily imply that the lady had other children who did not walk in the truth. It is said "[some] of your children". John probably does not know all her children, although he addresses all children in verse 1. It is possible that she still has younger children who

live at home. Walking in truth means that you daily live in the sphere of the truth, that is what God has revealed of Himself in Christ. Each aspect of your life ought to bear that characteristic.

Before John tells the lady to close and lock her door for false teachers, he first speaks of the commandment of love. He puts walking in truth on the same level as the commandment of love. It is not possible to walk in truth if there is no love. It is a "commandment from the Father" which you see fulfilled in the life of the Lord Jesus. The Father determined the footsteps of the Lord Jesus. From His love toward the Father He went the way the Father showed Him. The commandment is one of love and love causes someone to keep the commandments.

V5. Concerning the commandment of love, John has a question for the lady and that is that they also truly love one another in practice. He is not writing to her a new version of the commandment, he doesn't add anything to it, and he doesn't change anything about it. Of course it can be better understood and brought more into practice. That is what he is asking the lady. The commandment of love asks for a practical effect that can always be better. You can never say: 'Now I show enough love, more is not necessary' (cf. 1Thes 4:10).

This is "not ... a new commandment", for the Lord Jesus has already given it (Jn 13:34). The Lord indeed calls it a new commandment. That is because it is fulfilled in a new way, His way. It is also new because now it is also possible to be fulfilled by His disciples, for they have Him as their life. It is a new commandment from the beginning, which means from the performance of the Lord Jesus as Man on earth.

V6. The old commandment was imposed on man in flesh and was meant to gain life in that way. The new commandment belongs to the new life, that is Christ. It is not meant to gain life, but to live life. You have new life and you have received the Holy Spirit. Because of that you are able to fulfill the new commandment. You may say that the new commandment is new toward the old commandment in the following aspects:

1. it is not given as a condition to live;
2. it is perfectly practiced in Christ;

3. it is addressed to people who have that new life;
4. these people are in a relationship to God as children to the Father;
5. the standard is new, for loving can happen now 'as I have loved you'.

True love is tested by the fact whether one is walking according to the commandments of God. It can be said indeed that people love one another, but it is only true when it appears that the commandments of God determine their life. To love one another is to deal with one another in accordance with God's commandment. The love of a Christian is not a feeling in the first place, but a deed of obedience.

V7. The activities of the "many deceivers" who have gone out into the world, make it necessary that the believers walk in truth and in love. Because the lady is hospitable and welcomes workers for the Lord, providing them with food and accommodation, she is warned for these deceivers, who would misuse her kindness.

But how she is to find out whether she has got to do with a deceiver, who creeps into households and captivates weak women (2Tim 3:6)? Deceivers will not say that they are servants of satan and that they seek to deceive the saints (2Cor 11:13-15). The apostle is telling her that the deceivers are to be recognized by what they *do not* acknowledge. Not acknowledging means denying (1Jn 2:22).

A deceiver is someone who drags another person on the wrong path. The word is derived from 'lead into error' or 'lead astray'. Deceivers are people who have gone out to destroy Christendom with evil teachings. They confess Jesus Christ, but do "not acknowledge" Him "[as] coming in the flesh". Coming in the flesh implies that He became flesh when He came, that is, that He became Man and will remain Man forever. Ever since His coming in the flesh His being a Man is just as much included in His Person as His Godhead is included.

Denying that the Lord Jesus became truly Man has serious consequences for the faith. If He had not become truly Man, we absolutely never could have been saved. Through a man sin came into the world and therefore only a man could take away sin, which the Man Jesus Christ did.

The many deceivers are inspired by “the deceiver and the antichrist”. The spirit of that evil person is active in many persons. Each of the many deceivers personally has a direct connection with the deceiver and the antichrist. A deceiver is a foreshadow and harbinger of that one deceiver and antichrist and is preparing the way for him. Through these deceivers the foundation of the Christian faith is affected. That happens by denying the coming of Christ in the flesh.

Now read 2 John 1:3-7 again.

Reflection: Why is it important to walk in truth and in love?

2Jn 1:8-13 | The Teaching of Christ

8 Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. 9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into [your] house, and do not give him a greeting; 11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds. 12 Though I have many things to write to you, I do not want to [do so] with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, so that your joy may be made full. 13 The children of your chosen sister greet you.

V8. The call “watch yourselves” precludes the great warning that John has for this sister regarding the antichristian deceivers. These people attack the Son and teach things about Him that are blasphemous. They come at the door to bring their false teachings. The lady must not associate with them or receive them. You do not need to know all false teachings about the Lord Jesus. It is enough if you know the teachings of the Scripture about Him.

John speaks about himself and his co-workers. Those who came to faith through them must be careful not to lose those things that the apostles have worked for by listening to the deceiver. He who does not watch himself and thinks he can have contact with false teachers will lose the reward that he was going to receive. If the fruit of the labor will remain to the end, it will be ascribed to the one who received the teaching. That will happen when the believers do not open themselves for deceivers.

V9. “The teaching of Christ” is not the teaching that Christ has brought, first Himself and later by His apostles. It is the of which He is the object, the teaching concerning Him. The important characteristic of the teaching of Christ is wholeheartedly believed and acknowledged by each child of God, while the devil is making major efforts to spread false teachings about that. The teaching of Christ regards His eternal Godhead, His birth from a virgin, His perfection as Man, His sinlessness, the impossibility of sinning, His substitutionary suffering, His physical resurrection, glorification and return.

Each deviation of this teaching must be firmly rejected by you. The difference between the teaching of Christ and that what deviates from it and

how you recognize it, is to be illustrated as follows. It is like someone who is trained to distinguish false banknotes from the genuine ones. Such a person is taught in the smallest details about the composition, the appearance and the structure of a genuine banknote. When after his graduation he receives a stack of banknotes with some false ones in between, he will surely pick the false ones out. Has he studied the false ones? No, he has studied the real ones, which made him able to recognize the deviations. The counterfeits are many and ever more variants are emerging. All counterfeits have in common that they deviate from the genuine banknote in some detail.

Apply this to the voice of the good Shepherd and the voice of the stranger of the devil. If you know the voice of the good Shepherd, then any other voice will be that of a stranger, someone who serves the devil (Jn 10:4-5).

It is about false teachers here, people who know what they say and who try to get their false teachings accepted. It is not about people who are deceived or who even ignorantly use terms that dishonor the Lord. Such people would be willing to admit their mistake directly when they are corrected by others.

The description in verse 9 goes further than only the denial that is mentioned in verse 7, the denial of the Manhood of the Lord Jesus. The teaching of Christ contains the whole revealed truth about the Lord Jesus, everything concerning His personal glory. With “anyone who goes too far” are meant the false teachers, who claim to have and to bring more light, new epiphanies, something new that was unknown before. Many have been caught up in their errors by their credible but deceptive language.

‘Going too far’ is to go beyond a limit that God has determined. He “who goes too far”, goes beyond the Divine revelation and in that way deviates from what God has made known. Going too far is adding something to God’s Word, which will certainly be judged by God (Rev 22:18). It is not a progress but apostasy. He who is not satisfied with the truth of God in Christ and for that reason goes further than that truth, will lose it. To go beyond the inspired Word by exchanging it for fabrications of the human spirit means not to have God. On the other hand, he who abides in the

teaching has the highest, deepest and most intimate revelation of the God-head.

V10. John points out that when someone comes at the lady's door who does *not* bring the teaching of Christ, she may not to receive him in her house and may not to greet him. He forbids any support here to all who deny in their teaching that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God Who became Man. To accommodate and give food to such people means that she spends her time, strength and means for the advance of false teachings. In that way she supports the devil with his despicable work.

You are not to open your door to false teachers. You are not to allow your house to be serving as a base for something that destroys Christendom. It is important to see that it is not so much about what the false teacher brings, with which false teaching he comes, but what he does *not* bring. He does not bring the Son of the Father. In no way it is permitted to have any contact with such a person.

The greeting John is talking about, is not the simple greeting 'good morning' that you say to someone if you meet him and of whom you do not know whether he is a false teacher, for instance a Jehovah's witness. If you know that your neighbor or colleague belongs to the sect of the Jehovah's witnesses, your attitude toward him will be reserved. You will have the necessary contacts, but no more than that.

If he is in need of help you will not leave him alone. But as soon as your neighbor or colleague or an unfamiliar person comes at your door to impose his false teaching on you, you must be radical and certainly must not wish him a 'good morning'. The man is out spreading pernicious teachings. If you then wish him a 'good morning' you wish him success in his wicked works and participate in it yourself. I assume that is not what you want. You are not to do anything that could give the impression that a false teaching is something insignificant. You must keep yourself far away from everything that gives the false teacher the opportunity to influence others.

V11. You cannot separate a person from his wicked works. To bring a wicked teaching is doing a wicked work and a wicked teaching results in wicked works. Greeting such a person is participating in his evil deeds. It

means having fellowship with his person and with everything that is in him, in this case also with his wicked works.

It goes without saying that in the church both the false teacher and the one who receives him or greets him, cannot partake of Christian fellowship and of course not of the Lord's Supper. He who partakes of a church where a false teaching is being proclaimed or where evil practices occur, which are not judged by that church and which are not removed from their midst (1Cor 5:13b), cannot be allowed to partake of the Table of the Lord. Such a person must first purify himself of those practices by withdrawing himself from them (2Tim 2:19-22) and then he can partake of the Lord's Supper.

He who thinks that he can remain in a fellowship and can even partake of the Lord's Supper where these things occur, indicates to be indifferent toward evil. It may be the case that he himself does not partake of them, that he even condemns these things, and even resist against them. However, if a person does not do anything with the evil and lets it happen, he cannot possibly remain there with a free conscience. To him the call applies: "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues" (Rev 18:4).

V12. John could have written more, but he has limited himself to write the most necessary, what has direct relevance. God's Spirit has made sure that he has written down what is important for the church in all ages. He would like to share with her what he has more on his mind when he will meet her (cf. 1Cor 11:34). John longs to see her face to face and to rejoice together with her in the blessings of the Christian faith that have become their part in Christ. The joy that is found therein is complete (1Jn 1:4). Exactly the thought of joy in time of need and confusion, an end time, is encouraging. John writes this letter with a view to that time (1Jn 2:18).

V13. John concludes his letter by conveying to the lady the greetings of her nephews and nieces who are apparently with him. The nephews and nieces have a good relationship with their aunt. By the way, this is a proof that it is about persons here and that with the addressed lady is not meant a church in veiled terms. The sister is as the lady to whom John is writing, a chosen lady (verse 1). Her being chosen is not a hidden matter. John also sees in her life the proofs of it.

In that way others may talk about you and the other way around. That does not make a person proud, but rather humble. It implies the awareness that God did something with you, which was already established before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4). Was there anything in you that could have been a reason for it to happen? It also gives a great assurance that He knows you, in spite of what you are in yourself. You can only give Him the glory for that in great gratitude.

Now read 2 John 1:8-13 again.

Reflection: What is 'the teaching of Christ'?

Other Publications

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