The Second Epistle of JOHN

Salutation

1The elder, to the elect lady[1] and her children, whom I love in truth—and not I only, but also all who have known the Truth—2because of the Truth,[2] who abides in us and will be with us into the age: 3Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Sovereign[3] Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, will be with you[4] in truth and love.

Walk in Christ's commandments

4It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we received commandment from the Father. 5And now I put a request to you, lady (not as though writing a new commandment to you, but one that we have from the beginning): that we love one another. 6And this is the love,[5] that we live according to His commandments—this is the commandment,[6] just as you heard from the beginning, that you should live according to it.

Beware of deceivers

7Now many deceivers have come into the world,[7] who do not

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[1] Commentaries are divided between understanding the "lady" to be a specific woman or a local congregation. It seems to me more probable that the clause "also all who have known the Truth" would apply to a congregation—a congregation would be more widely known and loved than an individual woman. The "elect sister" in verse 13 below would be another congregation.

[2] I take "the Truth" to refer to the Holy Spirit because of the following clause, "will be with us into the age / forever"—'truth' as a package of true propositions could be said to abide in us, but to be with us forever fits better with a Person. The truth is a basic characteristic of the Holy Spirit (John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13, Titus 1:2).

[3] Some 8% of the Greek manuscripts omit "Sovereign" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.), but the 92% are doubtless correct.

[4] The Greek manuscripts are about evenly divided between "you" and 'us', but the best line of transmission has "you". I imagine that the difficulty arose from the use of the future indicative with the verb 'to be', when the optative or subjunctive would be expected. We expect 'may mercy… be with you', not the affirmation that it will be. If "in truth and love" is understood as modifying the pronoun, then the use of the indicative is explained. Anyone who is in truth and love will have grace, mercy and peace. Now there you have an excellent motivation for embracing truth and love!

[5] The Text has the definite article with "love"—from God's point of view, the way we express "the love" He is looking for (as opposed to any number of other loves) is by obeying Him. The Text has "that we walk…"—I render "live" because I take that to be the real point.

[6] "The commandment" is to live according to His commandments. It is a different way of stating what the Lord said in Matthew 22:37-38. "Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment'." (See also Mark 12:30 and Luke 10:27.)

[7] Some 82% of the Greek manuscripts have "come into" rather than 'gone out into' (as in most versions). The 18% presumably have the deceivers going out from the church into

acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in flesh[1]—this is the deceiver, even the Antichrist![2] 8Look to yourselves, so that we not lose the things for which we worked but may receive a full reward.[3]

9Anyone who turns aside and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God;[4] but whoever continues in Christ's teaching does have both the Father and the Son.[5] 10If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house; do not even tell him, "I wish you well," 11because whoever tells him, "I wish you well," participates in his malignant works.[6]

Farewell

12Although I had many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; instead I hope to come to you and speak face to face, so that our joy may be complete.

13The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen.

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the world, but that is not John's point. The deceivers have been introduced into the world by Satan, the original and boss deceiver.

1 The Text has "coming", not 'having come', so evidently John is referring to Christ's second coming, which will certainly be "in flesh". Recall the word of the angels in Acts 1:11, "This very Jesus who is being taken up from you into the sky, He will come again in the precise manner that you observed Him going into the sky." The angels are emphatic; the return is going to be just like the departure. I take it that the Lord will return with the same glorified human body, visibly, come out of a cloud, and His feet will touch down at the same spot where they left (see Matthew 24:30, "coming on the clouds", and Zechariah 14:4, "His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives").

2 John is affirming the real source of the idea that Christ will not return in bodily form.

3 Some 17% of the Greek manuscripts put this verse in the 2nd person plural throughout (as in NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.), but the 83%, including the best line of transmission, are correct. John is concerned about the results of his labors (see 1 John 2:28), as was Paul (1 Thessalonians 2:19).

4 If you turn aside, you are out. "Does not continue" can only refer to someone who has been 'in'.

5 As in verse 3 above, John emphasizes that the Father and the Son are distinct Persons.

6 People who do not believe and teach what Christ taught are on the other side. To be malignant is to be aggressively evil. Obviously, we should avoid anything that might be interpreted as identification with such people.