

**International Sunday School Lesson**  
**Study Notes**  
**April 26, 2015**

**Lesson Text: II John 1:1-13**  
**Lesson Title: Watch Out for Deceivers!**

**Introduction**

Second John is the second in a series of three epistles authored by the Apostle John. John's second epistle was most likely written between A.D. 90-95, or just shortly after the first epistle while John was in Ephesus. Second John focus on truth and the influence false teachers were having upon believers and churches. During the first century, religious teachers traveled from place to place drawing large crowds to listen to their interpretation of Scripture. Because Christian's were hospitable, they would often open their homes to these traveling teachers. While that was the Christian thing to do, it could also expose the new believer to dangerous error and false doctrine. John wrote this second epistle to warn believers to watch out for deceivers.

The message in John's second epistle is desperately needed in our day of mass communication and electronic access to the world. False teachers and deceivers have more access to our homes and our minds than ever before. While our front doors may be bolted and our security systems activated, there are so many other entrances that Satan has utilized to deceive. Television, the internet, and social media in general has become a breeding ground for the spread of false doctrine. Entertainment is a hot house for the growth and distribution of new age philosophy. Every false doctrine has a beautiful face behind it, an attractive personality, a beautiful smile, and it's all in "high definition" with bright lights and the promise of success, wealth, and health.

Don't be deceived. The deceivers are not dressed in red pajamas with a pitch fork and a tail. They are well dressed and have an intellectual appearance. They are the perfect weight, height, and they appear to be everything you would want to be (2 Corinthians 11:14). They rarely say anything negative about the way others believe or interpret Scripture. And you can rest assured they are surrounded by wealth and financial gain usually disguised as "sowing seed" into their ministry (Ezekiel 34:2, 8, 10; 1 Peter 5:2).

**Our Behavior among Deceivers (2 John 1-6)**

Verse 1

"The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth."

The “elder” John is referring to here is himself. Although John is no doubt an old man at the time he wrote this second epistle, “elder” is a reference to John’s position as spiritual overseer of the church and not his age. Calling himself “elder” would also send a strong message to watch out for the deceivers who most likely referred to themselves as an apostle or teacher.

John is writing to “the elect lady and her children.” The chosen lady to whom John is writing was an actual woman, not a church such as Corinth or Ephesus. Evidently this was a Christian woman John wanted to warn and encourage by this letter. The word “elect” is the Greek word *eklektos* {ek-lek-tos} and means “chosen or selected.” John uses the word “elect lady” to emphasize the biblical truth that this “lady” had been chosen by God for salvation (Ephesians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:9). To call someone “elect” is no different than calling them a Christian or a child of God. Jesus was not afraid to call believers “elect” (Matthew 24:22). It is a beautiful name for all who have been saved by grace.

John mentions her and her “children” but not her husband. The husband is most likely not mentioned because the wife would be the one responsible for showing hospitality to strangers. She would be the one to open the door to visitors. So John mentions her and the children.

“Whom I love in the truth” seems to suggest John had a personal connection with this lady and her children. He obviously cares about their spiritual well-being. To “love in the truth” does not mean that John truly loved them. It means that John loved them because of the “truth” of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Their connection and relationship was “truth.”

The Greek word for “truth” is *aletheia* {al-ay-thi-a} and refers to the revealed truth of God’s Word. The word “truth” is referenced four times in the first four verses of John’s epistle. It is clear that John is writing because he is concerned about “truth” and how this lady and other believers may be deceived. “Truth” is the issue in 2 John. And “truth” is still the issue today. Everyone either lives in “truth” or they live in lies and falsehood.

“And not I only, but also all they that have known the truth” means the “truth” is the common bond between all believers. Everyone who knew this lady and her children loved them because of the “truth.” If we know and love the truth, we will love those who also know and love the truth. The world is united and bound by lies. Christians and the church are bound together by truth (1 Timothy 3:15). Believers live to represent and proclaim the “truth.” Don’t be surprised when the world tells lies about Christ. That’s what the world is and that’s what the world does (Psalm 58:3).

Verse 2

“For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.”

“For the truth’s sake” is why John wrote this epistle. He wrote to this “lady” and “her children” to help them not compromise truth for the sake of hospitality or courtesy to these false teachers. Sometimes Christians are so dedicated to being nice and accepting that we compromise truth. While Christians should be Christ-like, we must never compromise “truth.”

The “truth” not only unites God’s children together, it also “dwelleth in us.” This “truth” John says, “dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.” The “truth” that reveals the gospel of Jesus Christ doesn’t change. It doesn’t come and go. It “dwelleth in us” and will “be with us for ever.” It stays, abides, and remains forever.

### Verse 3

“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.”

In the opening of his letter to the “elect lady,” John adopts a greeting that is similar to that of Paul, Peter, and James. He uses the words “grace, mercy, and peace” which all apply to the same thing but yet they are all a little different. These three words summarize God’s great plan of salvation. “Grace” is the undeserved love of God the sinner received when he was guilty and condemned before God. “Mercy” is God’s love extended to the helpless and needy which is the condition of every sinner (Ephesians 2:4-5). “Peace” is that tranquility of soul that comes to those who have received “grace” and “mercy.”

John says “Grace..., mercy, and peace,” come “from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.” It was “God the Father” who loved us and sent “the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.” The word “from” is in the verse twice which places emphasis on the equality of God the Son with God the Father.

The words “in truth and love” are connected with “Grace..., mercy, and peace.” John is actually saying, “Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, in truth and love.” He is desiring that grace, mercy, and peace, in truth and love will be displayed in the life and family of this elect lady to whom he writes this letter. He wants “truth” to dominate her mind and heart resulting in a sacrificial “love.”

### Verse 4

“I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.”

John had knowledge that this elect ladies “children” were “walking in truth” and it caused him to “rejoice greatly” or be thrilled. “Walking” means “treading around, or moving all around.” This ladies children had a manner of life and conduct based on “truth.” The “truth” of God’s Word is to be lived as well as believed!

John’s reference to “a commandment” that they had “received from the Father” is not a reference to one of the Ten Commandments or any commandment in particular. He is obviously speaking about all the commandments in Scripture that requires believers to obey. In other words, this ladies children obeys the word of God when they receive it. Christians are commanded to be holy and walk in obedience to the word of God. Christian know the truth, believe the truth, obey the truth, and live the truth.

#### Verse 5

“And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.”

Here again John brings up the subject of “love.” He “beseechs” or begs this “lady” to “love one another.” John does not hesitate to ask this lady to “love” because that is consistent with the Christian message or “truth.”

The “beginning” John refers to here is the beginning of the ministry of Jesus Christ at His incarnation. From the very “beginning” the message has been “love one another.” John is assuming that this basic “new commandment” of Christianity was understood by those to whom he wrote. True Christianity always produces “love” among the brethren.

#### Verse 6

“And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.”

Here John defines the true characteristics of “love.” “This is love” means we prove our “love” by “walking after his commandments.” Doctor J. Vernon McGee writes, “This is getting right down into shoe leather. This is sidewalk salvation!” And Doctor McGee was right. Christianity is not about what you do inside the walls of your church. It is living truth outside those walls. With that said, keep in mind that John is writing to this lady who is living in the Roman world under leaders like Nero. The Roman world was a cruel and bloody world that had little or no tolerance for Christians or Christianity. And yet, there were

Christians like this “elect lady” who were living and loving right out in the open streets of the Roman Empire.

*Note: Our behavior among a deceptive world must be that of love and obedience to the truth. That has been the Christian message from the arrival of Jesus and His ministry to this day. It is possible to behave and conduct our lives in obedience to truth even among a culture that is becoming more and more intolerant of Christianity and biblical truth.*

## **Our Boundaries among Deceivers (2 John 7-13)**

### Verse 7

“For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.”

Even in John’s day believers were already exposed to false teaching and spiritual deception. Jesus said it would happen (Matthew 24:4-5). John said “many deceivers are entered into the world.” The word “deceivers” means “wanderers.” In this context it refers to those who had wandered from the truth of Scripture concerning the person of Jesus Christ. There were false teachers in John’s day who were teaching that “Jesus Christ” did not “come in the flesh.” In other words, like many cults today, they denied that Jesus Christ was God in the flesh. To deny the deity of Jesus Christ and the biblical truth that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh makes one “a deceiver and an antichrist.”

“Deceivers” and “antichrists” refer to those false teachers within the church. Christians aren’t deceived by false religions such as Buddhists, Hindus, or Muslims. It’s those who infiltrate the church and pretend to be Christians such as Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, and every other belief system that denies Jesus Christ was God in the flesh. Also, those who deny that salvation is by grace through faith are “deceivers” and “antichrist.” “Antichrist” in this text is not a person by a denial of who Christ really is. They work against everything Christ is. Someone who denies the Trinity is a “deceiver” and “antichrist.” The proponents of the health and wealth gospel and those preachers and teachers who have removed sin from the gospel message are “deceivers” and “antichrist.”

### Verse 8

“Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.”

Knowing how deadly false teachers can be, John warns the elect lady, her children and all who would read his epistle, “Look to yourselves.” “Look” means “beware, see, and regard.” You can’t believe everything everyone says in the name of the Lord. You can’t just love everyone indiscriminately. It’s so popular

and sounds so good when people say God's loves everybody and everybody can get to heaven if they mean well. But that is false. The psalmist said, "*Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies*" (Psalm 139:21-22).

God's children must be on guard against deceivers and antichrists. If not, "we" could "lose those things which we have wrought." This has nothing to do with losing our salvation because we did not "wrought" our salvation. Salvation was a gift. However, we have "wrought" or toiled for what we have accomplished and gained in Christ since salvation. This is speaking about our stewardship in Christ. If we are deceived into believing lies and a distorted gospel, we could fail to "receive a full reward."

To lose a "full reward" means the believer could forfeit rewards in heaven and suffer loss at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11-15). The believers "reward" in heaven will be in accordance with services rendered to the Lord since conversion. It is no light thing to tolerate false doctrine and false teaching. Believers must be discerning and quickly reject biblical error, no matter how forcefully the false teachers ask for love and tolerance.

#### Verse 9

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."

"Whosoever transgresseth" and "abideth not in the doctrine of Christ" does not have "God." "Abideth" means "remain" or "continue." "Whosoever" stresses the fact that there is no respect of person here. "Whosoever" means it doesn't matter if it's a preacher, an evangelist, a missionary, a television preachers, a politician or anyone. Any person who does not stay with "the doctrine" has no claim to know God or be God's child. "Doctrine" can refer to the teaching of Christ or the teaching about Christ as recorded in Scripture.

"He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." The person who remains or stays with the teaching of Christ and the teaching about Christ recorded in Scripture has both the "Father and the Son." Deceivers and antichrists have a real problem with God the "Father" and God the "Son." They all differ on who Jesus is but they all agree He is not God in the flesh.

#### Verse 10-11

“If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”

The heart of this verse is the heart of John’s burden for writing to the elect lady and her children. Here it is. False teachers want to get into your home. That is their goal. Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons, and other cults who deny the deity of Jesus Christ, are known for coming to your home, not your church! The health and wealth guys and girls who distort the truth of the gospel rarely ring your door bell, but the media is full of their heresy. John says, “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house...” It’s plain and simple. If anyone is not teaching the “doctrine” or the truth about Jesus Christ as revealed in Scripture, “receive him not into your house” (1 John 2:22). And that means not only don’t let them in the front door, don’t let them in through your television, radio, internet, mailbox, or smart phone!

“Receive” is the Greek word *lambano* {lam-ban-o}. It means “take, to get hold of, and accept.” As Christians we are to be hospitable and loving to strangers but we should never open our homes to false teachers and those who peddle false doctrine. It is not enough to be against error, we must sever relations with it. The Apostle Paul said, “*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*” (Ephesians 5:11).

“Neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” When you refuse to let false teachers hand you a pamphlet or enter your house, do not say “God bless you.” “Bid” is the Greek word *lego* {leg-o} which means “to say, to speak, or to affirm.” “God speed” is the Greek word *chairo* {khah-ee-ro} which means “rejoice, be glad, and be well.” It was a common greeting among Christians. Now you may be thinking John is being a little harsh here. You may also be thinking that kind of response is unloving and may hurt the false teacher’s feelings. The feelings of the false teacher is not the issue. The issue is truth! And nothing is as dangerous as spiritual deception because nothing is as precious as truth!

Furthermore, if you do “bid” or say words such as “God bless you” to false teachers, John says you are a “partaker of his evil deeds.” The word “partaker” means “in fellowship with.” No genuine born again believer would want to contribute to the spread of false doctrine or be in bed with Satan. Satan has sent more souls to hell through false doctrine and false teachers than he ever has through alcohol or drugs. Watch out for deceivers!

Verse 12-13

“Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.”

John’s closing words in this little postcard indicates there is more that needs to be said about this subject of deception and God’s truth. He had much on his heart about which he would have liked to write to the elect lady and her children, but he didn’t write because he planned to visit them shortly and speak with them “face to face.”

The words “that our joy may be full” are interesting since they follow some very intense words of warning concerning how to handle false teachers. What is joyful about turning away false teachers and not even saying, “God bless you?” Where does “joy” come in the picture? It’s the “joy” of knowing that you have the “truth” and know the “truth” (1 John 1:4). Although Christians must take a firm stand against error and deception, the “truth” continues to give us “full joy.”

“The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen” are tender words from John to the elect lady. This seems to be a personal greeting from the elect ladies nieces and nephews and her sister. They sent their greeting to her through John’s letter. This tender closing is so special when you think about the difficulty of living in such a dangerous world. The words are a reminder that family is special, precious, and priceless. And the relationships we share as God’s family is special as well.

## **Conclusion**

There used to be an old saying, “Not everyone who carries a Bible is a preacher.” That statement reveals the fact that at some point in time somebody who trusted someone who claimed to be preaching truth was deceived. Long before that old saying was ever created, the Apostle John said, *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world”* (1 John 4:1). If that was true in the first century, how much more today!

As Christians we are taught to respect and love our fellow man. We want to be courteous and go the extra mile to be gracious. No one like to be ugly or rude to anyone. However, John is not teaching us to be rude or ugly. He is teaching us the danger of deception. Don’t ever feel bad by closing the door in the face of those who deny Jesus Christ is God in the flesh. They are at your door to deceive you and your family. Don’t watch false preachers and teachers just for the entertainment aspect of viewing. Casually sitting by and letting false doctrine air in your home is more dangerous than carbon monoxide.



May God help us to have spiritual discernment in these perilous times. Watch out for deceivers!

Amen.