

SERMON ON SECOND JOHN
AN ELECT LADY
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"The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in Truth; and not I only, but also all they that know the Truth" - II John 1 R.V.

It is not my custom to write about women; but I feel moved by the Spirit to write of a certain woman. The Apostle John is "the elder" who wrote this epistle. It is quite probable that a certain praiseworthy sister opened her house for the saints to assemble there. She and those assembled constituted "the elect lady and her children." A church met in John Mark's house - Acts 12:5, 12. Paul wrote of "Priscilla and Aquila ... the church that is in their house" - Romans 16:3, 5. See also Philemon 2. If John had written to an individual woman and her children in the natural, he would not have termed himself "the elder." The salutation of verse three gives the letter an official character, and treats the lady addressed as having an official place among the children who met in her home. Study the declarations of verse six, and the exhortations of verses eight and ten. The doctrinal dignity of the letter is too lofty for a personal word to a mere friend.

THE LADY'S TYPICAL PLACE

Two ladies are cited in this epistle. Contrast the last verse with the first. Evidently the one merely mentioned in verse thirteen is greater, as to her official place, than the one addressed. In verse one, the definite article "the" does not occur in the Greek. It does not read, "the elect lady," but simply "an elect lady." However, in verse thirteen, the article "the" occurs. The lady referred to is termed "the elect one," for the original reads thus - "The children of thy sister, the elect one, salute thee." John wrote this epistle to "an elect one." He addressed the lesser, and made mention of her sister as the greater.

Now these two ladies represent the two great bodies of believers on the Divine program. The first one, the lady herein addressed, stands for the Bride of Jehovah. The latter, "the elect," represents "the Wife of the Lamb." The lady addressed corresponds with the second one named in the love story of the Song of Solomon chapter eight. We read of her also in Isaiah 54:5 - "For thy Maker is thine Husband; the Lord of hosts is His Name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall He be called."

"Well," you may ask, "why do you read this letter to us if it is not addressed to us?" I am reading it for two reasons: First. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (or, is God-breathed), and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" - II Tim. 3:16, 17.

Second. The same principles, which obtain in Paul's writings to prepare us for the Bride of Christ, are found in this letter. There is much precious instruction here for us. A study of this epistle awakens in us a deeper appreciation of our union with Christ.

"An elect lady." The Greek word for "lady" is "kuria." It is the feminine of, and corresponds with, the Greek word "kurios" which means "lord," "master," "sovereign." The latter occurs many times in the New Testament with reference to Jesus Christ as our Lord or Sovereign. Our English word "lady" originally meant "a dairymaiden." We would

not expect the word ever to have the lofty meaning which it now has. A dairymaiden handled milk. The dairymaiden developed into being the mother of the home by furnishing the milk for the little ones. Thus she became the mistress of the house, the chief woman of the home, and finally the woman of honor. That is the significance of the English word "lady" now. It means a woman of high honor, one who occupies a titled place. She is the wife of a duke, or marquis, or sovereign. Certainly, the translators could not have found a more appropriate word in English, to express the deep spiritual application. It shows that the woman, to whom the apostle wrote, figures a titled one of high honor in the Kingdom of God. Evidently, she represents the Bride of Jehovah.

"Whom I love in Truth" - II John 1 R.V. The apostle loved the people of God, not with a feigned affection but in very truth. Therefore, he sought their greatest good, as does every unselfish minister of Christ. "Also all they that know the Truth" (R.V.) love the whole-hearted company of believers who shall form the Bride of Jehovah. To know the Truth with the heart is to love all who live by the Truth. In his high regard for the lady of honor, John may figure Jehovah who loved His people with an everlasting love.

"For the Truths sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever" - II John 2. They who know the Truth love the people of God for the Truths sake, and not for any selfish purpose or personal gain. If the Truth indwells us, it will purify our walk and talk and make us like unto the Author of the Truth. "It is in Truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe," said the Apostle Paul - I Thess. 2:13. Not primarily for the sake of the saints, but for the sake of the Scriptures which make them saints, do we love them and pour blessings upon them.

"Grace, mercy, peace shall be with us, from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love" - II John 3 R.V. What a beautiful salutation is this. It reminds us of the usual introductions which adorn the doorway of Paul's invaluable epistles.

Grace appears first. Yes, John also was a grace teacher. Every Scriptural minister proclaims "the Word of His grace." No marvel! For grace looms high at the portals of the first announcement of a new creation through God's sovereign scheme of redemption. God said to Satan, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed; He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel." Redemption was foreshadowed by God's next act. "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them" - Genesis 3:15, 21. Thus, Jehovah first expressed His matchless mercy and marvelous grace, by prefiguring redemption and righteousness for undeserving creatures. But observe that He showed no grace to the devil. He made no coat for him. His wicked nakedness was never covered from the eye of Divine holiness. Therefore, he will land at last in the lake of fire.

Peace is the first experience of a sinner who believes on Jesus. He enjoys peace with God, which is an evidence of sins forgiven. Later, he becomes filled with the peace of God which flows in his heart like a river.

The threefold salutation is from God the Father, who is termed "the God of all grace,"

"the Father of mercies," and "the God of peace" - I Peter 5:10; II Cor. 1:3; Hebrews 13:20. They who believe the Gospel become the children of the living God. The Fatherhood of

God was not known to the saints under the Old Covenant. It was, therefore, a precious revelation which John here emphasized. Jesus introduced this near relationship by teaching His disciples the family prayer which begins, "Our Father which art in Heaven." The salutation was from the Lord Jesus Christ also, because He is the necessary channel through which all blessings flow from God. The Lord said to Abraham, "In thy Seed (namely, Christ) shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" - Genesis 22:18; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8, 16.

"The Son of the Father." No one can be mistaken as to who is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is not the Father, but He is THE SON of the Father. This destroys with one blow the theory called, "New Issue," or "Jesus Only," or "One God!" That theory is one of the heresies exposed in this small package of Divine Truth. Two Persons of the Godhead are distinctly named in this verse. Consider also verse nine - "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." The adjective "both" implies two. It cannot be used except there be two distinct objects. Though they be alike, they must be distinct. The Father and the Son are not the same identical objects or Persons. They are distinct; and the Scriptures make a clear and pronounced distinction between them over and over, again and again. There is not the slightest ground for saying that the Father is the Son, or that the Son is the Father.

The title "Christ" - literally "the Anointed One" - implies the Holy Spirit, for "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power" - Acts 10:38. Jesus was the object of that anointing, and the Holy Spirit was the element of that anointing. Note that the Father was never anointed. He was the Anointer. Here are three definite and distinct Persons - the Anointer, the Anointed, and the Anointing. The essential feature of "the doctrine of Christ" is His eternal Sonship with the Father. That He was G o d s Son was the very necessary basis of redemption. That Holy Son humbled Himself and was clothed with humanity. Then that human form was anointed with the Holy Spirit and power. How simple, and yet how profound, is the Truth of God.

J o h n s salutation was "in truth and love." Grace was pronounced in truth and love. It was not a make-believe grace; hence, it was not administered with a sledge. Of course, it was not cold and stern but in love. With some Christian workers, grace is little more than a theory. They are always armed with a sword, to behead those who do not at once accept their cold message; or they carry a hammer, and endeavor to drive grace into their hearers. But Bible grace is real. It is living, warm, and gracious. "Speaking the Truth (even about grace) in love," said Paul - Ephesians 4:15. What a radical change had come over John, before writing this epistle. John and James were called, "the sons of thunder," before they knew G o d s grace - Mark 3:17. When a certain community once mistreated Jesus, these two disciples asked if they should call fire down out of heaven upon His foes. But now, having had a revelation of Divine grace and having been anointed with the Holy Spirit and having walked in that Spirit - even "the Spirit of grace" - for some years, John could promise grace, mercy, and peace "in Truth and love."

"I rejoice greatly that I have found certain of thy children walking in truth, even as we received commandment from the Father" - II John 4 R.V. This is the fifth time that

"truth" is mentioned in this little unique letter. The importance of the Truth cannot be overestimated. Therefore, it gladdened the apostle exceedingly to learn of some walking in it. If saints walk in the Truth, they love it. If possible; people live and move in the atmosphere of their liking. They choose the realm that pleases them. Walking in the Truth brings happiness and victory and usefulness. It makes glad the heart of the Father and of the Son, as well as saints who are spiritual. Unfortunately, only "certain" ones were thus walking. What a pity. But so it is today. How sad, that most of G o d s people do not walk in all the light which He gives them. They prefer to walk after the flesh. Hence, they "die," as to fellowship with God. They seek their own, and not the glory of the Lord. They bring discredit upon the cause of Christ, and bring the Truth into disrepute. Such saints do not adorn the Gospel by which they were saved. Of course, these "certain" ones who yield continually to the Holy Spirit and the Word of grace become distinguished for their out-and-out devotion, though they are also objects of criticism by half-hearted believers.

They receive consolations from the Lord, and sustain the bright hope of hearing Him say at last, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" - Matt. 25:21.

MUTUAL LOVE ENJOINED

"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" - II John 5. John did not add to what Jesus had spoken, like the Jews who added many commandments to the decalogue. They passed on the traditions of the elders, and they multiplied commandments. Catholicism has sixteen commandments, though she is not able to keep the ten which God gave to Israel. Plagues will be added to those who presume to add to G o d s Word - Rev. 22:18. Let us beware. John refers to Jesus words in his Gospel record - "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" - John 13:34. That verse is the explanatory essence of that chapter on feet washing, which most people mystify. John did not write a new commandment, but Jesus uttered one which John heard and wrote three different times. See also I John 3:23 - "And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the Name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment." Mutual love among G o d s people is exceedingly important. It is a theme which Paul also emphasized greatly and repeatedly. He gave the Church one entire chapter on the subject. See I Corinthians thirteen. The spiritual gifts are necessary to constitute a real Scriptural assembly. But the "more excellent way" is set in the midst as a balance wheel, as the governor, like on an engine. After naming seven vital spiritual garments, Paul added, "And above all these things put on charity (love), which is the bond of perfectness" - Colossians 3:12-14.

"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" - II John 6. The saying of Christ is a fine comment on this verse - "If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments" - John 14:15 R.V. That He said in connection with the promise of the Holy Spirit. Study closely John 14:21, 23, 24 and 15:10, bearing in mind that the Lord was speaking with reference to the Gift of the Spirit whom they should receive.

Therefore, Luke 24:49 was the first and chief promise and commandment - "And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." Waiting for the Comforter was the disciples first

expression of love to Christ. No other act of love, not even washing one another's feet, could take its place. No service, no sacrifice, can satisfy His heart. "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice" - I Samuel 15:22

"Tarry until" must come first. No one can keep the other commandments of Jesus, nor heed the admonitions of the epistles to the churches, without the anointing with the Spirit. People imagine that they can obey the love chapter (I Corinthians 13) without the Holy Spirit. Oh, no! We cannot understand that chapter until we are filled with the Spirit, for it stands between the two chapters which deal with the gifts or manifestations of the Spirit and the regulation of their operations. How can we say that we love Christ and keep His sayings, if we discard four of the spiritual gifts named in I Corinthians twelve? "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me," said Jesus - John 14:21. If the Holy Spirit in pentecostal fullness is not received, how can the first three gifts operate? - namely, "the word of wisdom," "the word of knowledge," and "faith." What chance has "love" to exercise? What can it govern if the gifts are disallowed? Who can love to the uttermost, without being full of the Spirit of love? God gave us the Spirit "of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" - II Timothy 1:7. But many folk will not receive Him. They think to substitute cold intellectual sanity for the sanity of the Spirit, because the working of the Spirit seem queer to the natural man to whom spiritual things are foolishness. It follows, therefore without the possibility of contradiction that to "walk after His (Christ's) commandments" we must heed His first commandment and be anointed with the Spirit as were the first disciples.

DECEIVERS DENOUNCED

"For many deceivers are gone forth into the world, even they that confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the anti-Christ" - II John 7 R.V. We quote from the Revised Version, because it shows that this verse refers directly to the second advent of Christ. I John 4:1-3 refers especially to His first advent. The Jews refused to admit that Christ ever came; that is, they denied that Jesus was the promised Messiah or Anointed One. That was the spirit of anti-Christ, for they were against G o d s Anointed Son. Now, in the end of this age of Divine mysteries, Satan would have men believe that Jesus is not coming again. Men are teaching that the only coming of Christ is when He enters hearts by the work of the Holy Spirit. Such teachers are here pronounced "false prophets" and "deceivers," because their doctrines are against Christ. One of the most essential features, the crowning feature of "the doctrine of Christ," is His second advent. It is the only hope of the Jews. It is the "blessed hope" of the Church - Titus 2:13. The consummation and culmination of all G o d s purposes for the whole world - Jews and Gentiles and the Church - are enfolded in the coming again of Jesus Christ. That is why Satan has thrust his false teacher upon mankind. At the same time, he is preparing a Christ-rejection world for a superman whom he will endow with devilish wisdom and power; and who will usurp the throne of Jesus Christ on earth - "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" - II Thessalonians 2:4.

Verse seven seems strange. It begins with "many deceivers," and ends with one deceiver and one anti-Christ. This is proof positive that this epistle was written especially for the last days. It is needed most, at this present time. Now Satan comes forth with an accumulation

of subtleties to hinder saints from being prepared to meet Jesus in the air. One fellow teaches that Jesus may not come for a hundred years. One says that He cannot come for twenty years. Another raises a fear by saying that we must not set dates. Of course, we do not set dates, but the Scriptures do. Still another claims that there is nothing certain about His advent. Finally, the most satanic statement is, "He is not coming at all." Therefore, the apostle said -

"Look to yourselves, that ye lose not the things which we have wrought, but ye receive a full reward" - II John 8 R.V. John and his co-workers taught the whole Truth, which wrought salvation in all who believed and a bright hope of the return of the Lord to reward the faithful. If the saints should be influenced by false teachers and lose the vision of Jesus coming, they would be robbed of the recompense which faith is sure to bring. In another place, John wrote the words of Jesus saying, "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" - Rev. 3:11. The same thought is implied here. According to the Authorized Version, John's reward would be affected, if his people did not walk faithfully with Jesus or look steadfastly for Christ to come. That is correct. Teachers are not remunerated only for giving out the Truth, but also for the effects of the Truth on the people. Paul asks, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy" - I Thess. 2:19, 20. Yes, the more effectually the Word works in believers, the greater will be the reward of the ministers of that Word.

"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" - II John 9. This verse continues the discussion about deceivers and the anti-Christ. Some manuscripts give "proagon" (Greek) which means, "goes on" or "leads out." This describes the character of deceivers. They keep going on, they take the lead, but stand apart from the doctrine of Christ. We have noted before what is comprehended in the phrase, "the doctrine of Christ." But, His second coming is especially referred to in verses seven to eleven, which we have already dwelt upon. The personality of the Son of God, as distinct from the Father, is also plainly set forth in this verse. Neither one is the Other. The Father cannot be called "the Son" or "Jesus"; neither can Jesus be called "the Father." Deity is not one Person revealed by three manifestations. Instead, there are three distinct and pronounced Persons in the Godhead, each filling His own particular office in full fellowship with the other two Persons. The Father is over all - the Father of all those who believe. The Son redeemed all by His atoning death, and is the Mediator for all who believe on Him.

The Holy Spirit is the power and enabling of all that the Man Christ Jesus did; and He is the Comforter, Teacher, and Guide of the saints. The Trinity of the Godhead is a very basic feature of "the doctrine of Christ." Let us not be deluded by Satan from this glorious and precious Truth.

"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" - II John 10, 11. The clause "bid him God speed," literally means, "say to him, Hail." The lady's house was the meeting place, the assembly room, of the congregation to which John wrote. Therefore, to admit a false prophet into her house was admitting him into the church. She should not even hail him in passing. There can be no fellowship between Truth

and error; hence, the Church should never extend greetings to false teachers. That is equivalent to having fellowship with Satan, even as believers have fellowship with God by accepting His Word. If we receive a deceiver or even hail him, we are counted as partaking of his evil deeds. We thus endorse anti-Christ. Instead, let us be "set for the defense of the Gospel" - Philippians 1:17.

"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" - II John 12. The apostle entertained the glad hope of visiting that assembly sometime, to minister verbally the whole range of Truth which was burning in his heart in their behalf. Doubtless, he had in mind a protracted meeting of giving Bible lessons for their upbuilding in the Lord. But, he seems also to represent Jesus, whose speedy advent looms before us so conspicuously in this small epistle. Jesus will have far more to say to us after we meet Him in the air than He can put on paper for us. What the Lord has sent us in writing is exceedingly small, when compared with what His Presence and His future instructions will mean to us. He has given us just enough information to qualify us for meeting Him and for the wedding in the sky.

We become filled with "the joy of the Lord" by eating His Word and by worshiping Him. But, there is a mutual joy of service rendered and of personal contact and fellowship between spiritual teachers and those taught, which will culminate with our meeting one another and Jesus on high. Therefore, Jesus says, "That your joy might be full" - John 15:11. Toil and tears will cease forever. Bliss will begin and never end. Nothing will ever jolt our joy. It will be full to the brim for evermore. Even the joy cup of the Lord will be filled full. He will enjoy His fellows, the multiplied members of His Body and Bride, with unspeakable and felicitous delight. The climacteric results of His Calvary pain and death and of His many years of infinite patience will be achieved. Therefore, Jesus is saying to us today, "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" - II John 13. This verse reads literally, "The children of the sister of thee, the elect one, salute thee. Amen." "To salute" or "greet" here means "to embrace, to caress, to cling to." Now if the lady addressed figures the Bride of Jehovah, and the elect sister figures the Bride of the Lamb, then this closing word means that the Church warmly salutes Israel. The children of the Lambs Wife greet the Wife of Jehovah; or, they shall salute one another. What a time of universal rejoicing that will be. The saints in Heaven will have fellowship with the saints on earth. A salutation in the East was formal, profuse, and prolonged. Hence, Jesus said that the disciples should not salute a stranger whom they might pass. That would appear like having fellowship with him. But, being born of the same spiritual Father, the children of both Brides will enjoy a profuse and protracted mutual greeting in the Millennium. They will enjoy mutually to the uttermost "the general assembly," or universal panegyric - Hebrews 12:23. Oh, Lord haste that glorious day!