



St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church
Heliopolis, Egypt



Commentary on
The 2nd Epistle of John



*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
the One and Only God,
Amen.*

An exegetical study of the Holy Bible

"commentaries on the New Testament"

The Second Epistle of St. John the Beloved

*prepared and published by priests and servants of
St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church
Heliopolis, Egypt*

*Translated by George Ishack, Ottawa, Canada, 2025
All biblical quotations are taken from the New King James version of the Holy Bible*

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*His Holiness Pope Tawadros II
118th Pope of Alexandria
and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark*

Prelude

1. The author:

As indicated in the title, it is authored by St. John the Beloved, Christ's disciple. This is corroborated by the epistle's style and expressions, which match St. John's gospel.

2. The epistle's intended audience:

It was addressed to "*the elect lady and her children.*" This could have been a specific lady, or, symbolically, a specific Church, or a certain Christian mother in any given church. In any case, it is a message addressed to the entire world.

3. Timing of the epistle - where it was written:

It was written in Ephesus, around 90 A.D, towards the end of St. John's life, and prior to his exile in the island of Patmos.

4. The epistle's purpose and features:

- a- Truth, Who is Christ, is the subject of evangelizing.
- b- Love.
- c- Warning against deceivers.
- d- The significance of Church Tradition.

5. The epistle's sections:

- a- Apostolic greetings (Verses 1 - 3)
- b- Love and truth (Verses 4 - 6)
- c- Warning against deceivers (Verses 7 - 11)
- d- Church Tradition - conclusion (Verses 12 & 13)



*"Interpretation of the holy Bible - the New Testament"
taken from the series: "Patristic expositions and meditations"*

An exegetical study of
The Second Epistle of St. John the Beloved

Steadfastness in the Truth

1. Initial greetings - verses 1 - 3:

"The Elder, To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth, because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love." (2 John verses 1 - 3)

Verse 1:

The Greek word for "**Elder**" is "Presvyteros" which refers to a person holding a position of leadership or authority in a community. Here, reference is made to St. John, who was not only advanced in age, but also the church's leader.

This is the only book in the Holy Bible addressed to a lady. She could have been a specific lady, or she could be a reference to the Church in general - her children could refer to believers everywhere, hence, God's chosen for eternal life. St. John declares his love for them, his love for the Ephesian Church, and for believers everywhere.

Verse 2:

The apostle clarifies the purpose of his epistle, namely, edifying believers in the Truth, Who is Christ, so they may live with, and in, Him, forever.

Verse 3:

Edification in Christ necessitates His grace and mercy. We acquire peace through life in Christ. We acquire all these blessings from God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, Who saved us on the Cross, due to His fulfillment of Divine justice, and infinite love, expended for our sake.

+ *Focus on knowing God through prayers and the Holy Bible; you will then grow in them, your love for God will increase, your heart will be filled with peace, and you will feel His presence in your life.*

2. Truth and love - verses 4 - 6:

"I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father. And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another. This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it." (2 John verses 4 - 6)

Verse 4:

The apostle encourages this lady - or the Church - by stating his joy at her children's conduct in truth, hence, Christian conduct. It should be noted that he started by encouragement, before his warning against deceivers.

Verse 5:

The apostle reminds the lady and her children of Christ's most important commandment, that they had learned since the beginning of their belief, namely, loving others.

Verse 6:

Details concerning the commandment to love God, and to love others, are given in the Holy Bible. Since the inception of our faith we have been required to conduct ourselves accordingly.

+ *Love is the aim of all dealings with others. Prior to speaking with anyone we should remember that our goal is love. We should thus avoid any discussions impeding this goal, forgive others for any wrongdoings, and use words of encouragement.*

3. Warning against deceivers - verses 7 - 11:

"For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds." (2 John verses 7 - 11)

Verse 7:

In the previous verses, the apostle emphasized the importance of adhering to the truth; that was due to the emergence of heretics in the Church, denying Christ's Divinity and incarnation. Those anti-christs were trying to deceive believers.

Verse 8:

The apostle warns believers to ignore heretics, and strongly resist such deceptive ideas - otherwise, they risked losing their Faith and eternity. Furthermore, believers should alert those who had strayed, urging their return to the sound Faith. Such spiritual alertness, plus aiding lost souls, would earn them a great reward in heaven.

Verse 9:

The apostle also accentuates the importance of adhering to Church teaching, in order to enjoy God's blessings throughout their lives. Such adherence would be through the holy sacraments as well as through the Holy Spirit's work in their lives. Those who accept heresies and deny Christ's Divinity are deprived of all God's New Testament blessings, that we acquire through Christ's redeeming blood.

Verses 10 & 11:

St. John reinforces his instructions by urging believers to boycott heretics, by shutting them out of their homes and even refusing to salute them - this preempts the risk of wavering believers to think that the Church tolerates heretics' teaching. Boycotting does not stem from the heart's wickedness, rather, it reflects loving firmness. We pray for the heretics' return to the sound Faith. Any degree of leniency in dealing with them is tantamount to accepting their heresies, and participating in deceiving others.

+ *Have a loving attitude towards everyone. Be humble and tolerant to all. Be firm in rejecting heresies and any teachings deviating from the Church's. Do not participate in any meetings with which you disagree, regardless of the apparent qualifications of those organizing them. Remain steadfast in the faith that we received from our forefathers, and for which many were martyred.*

4. Church Tradition - conclusion - verses 12 & 13:

"Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen." (2 John - verses 12 & 13)

Verse 12:

In his earlier discourse, the apostle focused on the importance of adhering to the truth, to love, and to rejection of deceivers' teachings. Put differently, he conveyed to them, verbally, many teachings, which are now labelled "Church Tradition." They embody apostles' teachings that are not written in the Holy Bible, but transmitted from one generation to the next, since it is practically impossible to record them all in the Holy Bible. Church Tradition may be inferred from apostles' messages given in the Holy Bible.

Verse 13:

By "**elect sister**" the apostle is referring to the Ephesian Church from which he had written his epistle. "**The children**" refers to that Church's members. The apostle chose the label "**elect**" since it is God's Church that He chose to be His bride and to enjoy eternity with Him. This accentuates the importance of an all-loving relationship between Churches sharing the same Faith throughout the world.

+ In each appropriate occasion, make sure that you learn from spiritual fathers and brothers. You will then receive from them the style of Christian love, and sound conduct, throughout life's different circumstances.

