



# Tweets from Heaven

#5 II John

## I. Introduction

A. This short letter could barely fill a single sheet of papyrus. (Fragile pieces of a plant that are placed side by side and then overlaid on each other. They are soaked in water and then dried under pressure. The standard size was about 8" x 10").

B. The author: "The Elder"

1. Presumed to be the apostle John (writer of the fourth gospel).

Tradition identifies John as the author of the gospel and these three epistles. From the third century on, we have extra biblical references that connect John to all four books of the Bible.

2. "The Elder" can mean an old man, a senior official of a church or an older person deserving respect.

Apparently John is so well known to the recipient that he can just refer to himself with his title.

C. The recipient: "The Chosen Lady"

1. The term may refer to an entire church (a kind of personification) (See 1 Peter. 5:13 for an example)

2. It may be an actual woman. The personal references (vs. 5, vs. 10, vs. 13) suggest "that he is writing to a literal woman."

D. The occasion of the note:

1. The canon of the scripture was not yet complete. In order to spread the gospel, itinerant preachers and teachers were needed. Churches and groups of believers welcomed these spiritual visitors and were very hospitable to them.

2. Unfortunately, false teachers also proliferated among the churches. Their evil teaching deeply impacted the work of the Lord.

"The problem became so widespread that strict rules were eventually laid down in *The Didache*, or "The Teaching," an early book of church order. The following excerpt illustrates the kind of precautions that had to be taken.

Let every apostle that cometh unto you be received as the Lord. And he shall stay one day, and, if need be, the next also, but, if he stay three, he is a false prophet. And, when the apostle goeth forth, let him take nothing save bread, till he reach

his lodging, but, if he ask money, he is a false prophet.... But not everyone that speaketh in the Spirit is a prophet, but if has the manners of the Lord. By their manners, therefore shall the prophet and the false prophet be known. And no prophet who ordereth a table in the Spirit shall eat of it, else he is a false prophet. And every prophet that teacheth the truth, if he doeth not what he teacheth, is a false prophet....Whosoever shall say in the Spirit: Give me money, or any other thing, ye shall not hearken to him: but, if he bid you give for others who are in need, let no man judge him." (Charles R. Swindoll, Bible Study Guide, p. 12)

Essentially, John was warning this dear woman to "make sure her love had limits." Just because the teacher names the name of Christ, he should be "tested." He may be a "snake in sheep's clothing."

2 John 7-9 "I say this because many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch out that you do not lose what we have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. "

- E. The heresy was likely "gnosticism." A kind of religion that sees the soul as being trapped in an evil body. It postulates that there is a hidden wisdom that only a select group can know and understand.

## **II. The role of truth – in the context of love (the term "truth" appears five times in the first four verses)**

- A. vs. 1-4 His kind introduction and personal reference to her children. Truth is the source of love and fellowship.
- B. vs. 5-6 The connection between love and truth (see Eph. 4:15)

"The linking of truth and love is of great importance. Because John's readers are in the truth, i.e. they know Jesus as the Christ, the Father's Son – they are also recipients of God's love as it is known and manifested in the community of faith. And the love received by the community comes from all who know the truth. The community of love is as encompassing as the truth that is believed and lived.

The author is speaking in clear contrast to the heretics. They do not have the truth nor do they know what it means to be in the community of love."

(Expositor's Bible Commentary, p. 362)

## **III. So what?**

Consider what role TRUTH plays in your spiritual life. Are you prepared to "test" modern preachers?

Consider these fundamentals of the faith:

- Inerrancy of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16, 2 Pet. 1:21)
- Virgin birth and deity of Christ (Isa. 7:14, Mat. 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38; John 1:1, 14; 8:53-58; Col. 1:15-20; Heb. 1:3,8)
- Sinless nature and life of Christ (Heb. 4:15)
- Substitutionary death of the Savior (Rom. 5:6-8; 2 Cor. 5:21)
- Effectiveness of Christ's blood to cleanse sin (Heb. 9:22, 26; 1 John 1:7,9)
- Bodily resurrection of Christ (Luke 24:36 – 43; 1 Cor. 15:1-11)
- Ascension of Christ and His present ministry to the believer (Acts 1:6-9, John 14:12-21; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 4:7-10)
- Literal, future return of Christ to the earth (John 14:1-3; 1 Thes. 4:13-18)

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## Discussion Questions

1. What does the instruction "speak the truth in love" mean to you? Is it hard or easy to do so?
2. As we parent our children, what role should "truth" play? Give some practical examples of how it might play out in your home.