**2 John 1:1-3**

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/2john/2john-1/2-john-11-3/>

The apostle John addresses his letter in coded language. He does not introduce himself, nor does he mention the location of the church to which he’s writing. John emphasizes truth and love in his opening address, because these are the main concerns of this brief epistle.

This letter is attributed to the Apostle John based on early church tradition. He begins the letter by addressing himself as The elder. John was an apostle of Jesus, and could have addressed himself as such. With that authority, he could have commanded. But it seems his goal here was to serve as a protector to the church, which is the proper role of the elders. And in his role as protector, he is careful not to lord over, but rather to serve in truth and love (1 Peter 5:1-4).

The term translated elder is the Greek word “presbyteros.” This word is translated “elder” throughout the gospels to refer to leaders in Israel. So it is borrowed from Jewish culture, and applied to the Christian church. John of course is Jewish, having been a disciple of Jesus. The Greek word borrowed from Greek culture that is also translated “elder” is “episkopos.” They apply in the same way.

The job of elders is to protect the church, as a shepherd protects a flock of sheep. They are to serve as under-shepherds, for Jesus is the Chief Shepherd, and the church is His flock (1 Peter 5:1-4). John will exercise this function in this letter. John addresses the letter to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth. The term chosen lady likely refers to a church, and her children refers to those within the church, perhaps including those individuals who meet in homes within that city (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 1:2).

This seems likely since John addressed himself as “elder,” which is an appropriate position of authority to address a church, but not so much to address a particular woman. It also seems likely that this is a church based on John’s phrase at the end of the letter: “the children of your chosen sister greet you.” This phrase indicates that John is writing from another church, and is sending greetings from the “children” of that church, meaning those who attend the sister church. It seems out of context to think of the Apostle John sending greetings between two women and their children, while addressing a single person regarding false teaching.

It could well be that John used what sounds to us as an obscure greeting in order to protect the intended recipients from persecution, in the event that the letter is intercepted. The fact that this letter does not mention any names or places would also support this idea.

John calls this church the chosen lady. The word translated chosen is sometimes translated “elect.” It is used throughout the New Testament to refer to believers’ position with God. The word is used in the LXX (Greek translation of the Old Testament) to refer to something deliberately selected, as well as to indicate favor, as in the seven “favored/chosen” fat cows in the dream Joseph interpreted (Genesis 41). Both apply.

The Bible makes clear that each individual has a genuine choice whether to believe in Christ, a choice for which they will be held responsible (John 3:14-16; Acts 17:27). But the Bible also maintains that God determines all things, including selecting believers before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). This fits the paradoxical nature of God, whose kingdom is the true and abiding kingdom, but not of this world, and who tells us that the way to save our life is to lose it, and the way to be first is to be last (Matthew 16:25; 20:16). His ways are higher than our ways, but they are also true, and right. It is up to us to do what we are given the responsibility to do, and that is to make the choice to trust God, to believe that what He says is in our best interest really is.

The Bible makes clear that all believers are justified in the sight of God as a matter of grace (Ephesians 2:8-9). Grace is God’s favor, extended as a matter of His mercy. So the lady (church) could be chosen in the sense of having been granted favor in God’s sight, and having received His mercy. In the instance of being justified in the sight of God, God extends His favor to those who believe in Jesus, because of what Jesus did on our behalf (John 3:14-16).

John says the believers in this church are those whom I love in truth. The fact that he adds “truth” to his expressed love for those in the church sets up the admonition he will soon make for the church to walk in the truth. It is not only John who loves this church in truth. This church is also loved by all who know the truth. John here is saying that if anyone actually knows the truth, then they will love this church in truth.

 That will of course mean that anyone who tries to lead believers astray from the truth does not love them, but is preying upon them. The job of an elder, like John, is to shepherd the flock of believers, and protect them from being devoured by deceiving wolves, who desire to prey upon them. That means the job of an elder is based in truth. The true expression of love by an elder is to confront false teaching. It is to oppose what is false, and elevate what is true.

John gives a reason why both he, as well as all who know the truth, will love this church in truth: It is for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever. The truth abides in us, because Christ abides in all believers. Clearly John is a believer in Christ, and is addressing a group who are believers in Christ. There is no doubt expressed to question whether they are in Christ or not. Quite the opposite. John insists that the truth abides “in us.” By using “us,” John includes the “children” of the church, as well as himself. Jesus Christ is the truth, and the truth both abides in them and will be with them forever.

John recorded these words of Jesus in his gospel:

“So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, ‘If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.’"
(John 8:31-32)

This verse from the gospel of John indicates that we ingest the truth through drinking in “My word.” Here in John’s gospel, Jesus says “My word” in the singular, rather than “My words.” This would indicate that “My word” is synonymous with Jesus. John indicates in 2 John that the truth which abides in us, is also truth that will be with us forever. Since the truth will be with us forever, it seems John is referring here to Jesus as the living truth. To know the truth is to know Jesus, and to know Jesus is to know the truth.

This introduces the primary topic of the letter: truth, and abiding in the truth in love. John’s elder job is to protect the church from false teaching. And he does so by standing for the truth, and against false teaching.

John now gives a salutation, saying:

 Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

 John does not say this as a prayer, as do many letters. He makes a factual statement. He asserts that grace, mercy and peace will be with us. He does not wish or hope for grace, mercy and peace. He asserts that these things will be with us. This comes from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father. And the grace, mercy and peace that John asserts will come to them will come in truth and love.

 This is a theme of John’s gospel, in which he writes: “For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ”
(John 1:17).

 Since grace and truth were realized through Jesus, then as believers walk with Jesus, we will walk in grace and truth. When we walk in Christ, grace, mercy and peace will be with us.

Grace is the Greek word “charis” and means “favor.” Context determines who is giving favor to whom, and for what reason. “Charis” is translated “favor” in Luke 2:52 to describe “favor” being given to Jesus by both God and men, because he was growing in wisdom and stature. God gives “favor” or grace to anyone who believes on Jesus, by bestowing the unmerited favor of forgiveness (Ephesians 2:8-9). But God also bestows favor, or grace (“charis”) by exalting/rewarding those who humble themselves before Him (1 Peter 5:5-6). God never owes anyone favor, so God’s favor is never merited in the sense that anyone can demand anything from God. But God does make clear what He honors, and promises to grant favor, or rewards, if we believe Him, and follow His ways.

Any time God bestows any favor upon us, it is an act of mercy. Paul prayed that Onesiphorus would be given mercy at the judgement seat of Christ for the good deeds he had done (2 Timothy 1:18). God never owes anyone. His rewards stem from His mercy. Thankfully, God is a God of mercy (Psalm 86:15).

The peace that the Jewish John states will be with us is likely the Jewish idea of “Shalom.” This is used as a greeting in Israel to this day. It carries the idea of a holistic harmony of life, including all things spiritual as well as physical. John asserts that grace, mercy and peace will come to them all through truth and love. And that comes from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father. The church is a part of the Body of Christ. And we have all these blessings when we abide in Him.

**Biblical Text**

**1 The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth, 2 for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: 3 Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.**