

Who Is the Elect Lady?

The second of the Johannine Letters is explicitly addressed to “the elect lady and her children” (2 John 1). Who was this person? Was there some prominent woman in the early church to whom this letter was written?

Some interpreters have thought that the “elect lady” might be the leader of a house church, similar to those churches that are apparently led by Gaius (3 John 1) and by Diotrephes (3 John 9) and by the elder himself.

The more common view, however, is that “elect lady” is a metaphorical expression for the church itself: the lady is the church in some particular vicinity, and her children are the members of that church. In support of this interpretation, scholars note that the elder seems to refer to his own church as the lady’s “elect sister” (2 John 13).