

The Last Impression

A Look at the Conclusions of Various Epistles

I John

Initial Meeting

Hard to say when this happened because the initial recipients aren't mentioned in the book – neither is the author! However, the inclusion of the author being an eyewitness of Christ's Passion as well as the content and style matching very closely with the fourth gospel point to John being the author of this letter as well. John was a well-known figure in the church, especially among the churches of Asia Minor, since eventually John left Jerusalem and lived in Ephesus. Patmos, the island where John was exiled, is not too far away.

Current Situation

This letter is not for a group of new believers who had some misunderstandings to work through. John, now a seasoned apostle and care taker of souls, reminds his readers that the Word was made flesh and made his dwelling among us. That Word is Jesus. Jesus is the Light of Life and love of God in the flesh. We love because God loved us first. God is love. John confronts comfortable Christians with many calls to simply love your neighbor, whom you see, and if you don't, how can you love God, whom you can't? Chew on I John a while to be led to repentance, to be assured of God's love for you and Jesus' forgiveness, and to be empowered to live the light of Christ.

Last Impression

I John 5:13-21

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. ¹⁴This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him. ¹⁶If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that. ¹⁷All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death. ¹⁸We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him. ¹⁹We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. ²⁰We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. ²¹Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.

1. As John begins the letter's conclusion, what reason does he give for writing the letter in the first place?

2. Do you have eternal life? How do you know?
3. John speaks about prayer in **vs. 14-15**. Whatever we ask, we have? Really? Why do we sometimes have a tough time with passages like this? How can we understand it?
 - **React:** Prayer is not a dictation to God to do thus and so, but a statement of our needs as we see them. And it is our heavenly Father who gives us more than our short-sightedness permitted us to know.
4. What specific type of prayer is mentioned in **v. 16**?
 - Explain the rest of what **vs. 16-17** are talking about. Are there different categories or levels of sin?
 - What is the one sin that John says we shouldn't pray about?
5. I sin and you do too, but we all believe in Jesus! How can **v. 18** be true?
 - Does **I John 3:9** help us understand? Does **Galatians 2:19-20** help us understand?
 - How does John identify the one who keeps you safe?
6. How are we to live in a world controlled by the evil one?
7. John highlights what's essential for salvation in **v. 20**. What does he say so we know what we need to know for eternal life?
8. How can it end like this??? This isn't uplifting, is it?! This isn't how our proper Lutheran sermons end! Is John doing it wrong?? Why end on this note?