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THE HOLY BIBLE **NKJV** REFERENCE GUIDE

NEW TESTAMENT

BOOK 60

1 PETER



Saint Peter, the Prince of the Apostles

SUMMARY

The first word of this epistle, Peter, identifies the author, who called himself an apostle of Jesus Christ. He wrote this letter to a group of Christians scattered throughout the northern areas of Asia Minor, where he may have previously preached the gospel.

Peter wrote to a group of people that probably included both Jews and Gentiles. The apostle addressed the letter's recipients as aliens, a word indicating that Peter was speaking not just to Jews or just to Gentiles but to Christians who were living their lives in such a way that they would have stood out as aliens among the surrounding culture.

In this letter, Peter spoke much about persecution, which anticipated the persecution he and other Christians would endure in the final years of Nero's reign. At the time he wrote, Peter had not yet been arrested, an event that would lead to his martyrdom around AD 66–68.

First Peter 5:13 indicates that Peter sent greetings from the local church—calling it Babylon, but it's most likely that the apostle was writing in a common metaphor there. He used the name of the ancient Mesopotamian city as a stand-in for Rome, the modern city that, like Babylon, gave itself over to idol worship and false gods.

While the fact is not recorded in the Bible, Peter has long been thought to have spent his final years serving the church in Rome. Based on the numerous references to suffering and persecution in this letter, Peter likely wrote in AD 64, just as the persecution of Christians under Nero was ramping up.

First Peter focuses on the importance of believers bearing up under unjust suffering yet continuing to live well. In this way, 1 Peter might be called the Job of the New Testament, providing encouragement for the true believer to continue on in the way that Jesus has laid out for all His followers.

The endurance Peter called these believers to is similar to Job's, a man who suffered despite his righteousness. Peter maintained that this was the kind of true perseverance that God expects from His people.

Living in close proximity to Jesus Christ for more than three years had provided the apostle Peter the best possible example of what it looked like to live in holiness amid a hostile world.

More than any other man who walked the earth, Jesus modeled that lifestyle. Peter therefore pointed his readers in the best possible direction, to Jesus Himself. The apostle called Christians to sanctify Christ as Lord in their hearts, that believers might live and act as Jesus desires during their short time here on earth.

This would include submission to authority, even unjust authority in the government, in the home, and in the workplace. Jesus becomes the focal point for ordering one's life in the midst of trials and tribulations. By rooting their perseverance in the person and work of Christ, believers can always cling to hope in the midst of suffering.

Unjust or unforeseen suffering is one of the great problems that grips the hearts of people today. We struggle with frustration, anger, and uncertainty when trials strange and unexpected land on our doorsteps.

SUMMARY Continued

Too often in those most difficult moments of our lives, confusion reigns while contentment wanes; questions arise while prayer subsides. How do you react when suffering comes?

Many crumble at the mere thought of another pain or trial. Others rise to the occasion. Most of us are probably somewhere in between. Peter's encouragement to his Christian readers is one of perseverance in faith.

It isn't enough for us to simply get up every morning and trudge through each day; neither is it advisable to paste a smile on our faces and ignore troubles.

Instead, the lesson of 1 Peter is to push through the troubles, recognizing their temporary presence in our lives while walking in holiness and hope as people of faith. So press on! It is in the darkest times that our collective light shines brightest.

NKJV SELECTED SCRIPTURE

- 1:6** In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,
- 1:7** that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,
- 1:8** whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,
- 1:9** receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of your souls.
- 1:13** Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;
- 1:14** as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance;
- 1:15** but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,
- 1:16** because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy".
- 1:20** He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you
- 1:21** who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.
- 1:22** Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,
- 1:23** having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,
- 1:24** because "All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away,
- 1:25** But the word of the Lord endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.
- 3:8** Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous;
- 3:9** not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.

NKJV SCRIPTURE Continued

- 3:10** For "He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit.
- 3:11** Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it.
- 3:12** For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."
- 3:13** And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?
- 3:14** But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled."
- 3:15** But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;
- 3:16** having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.
- 3:17** For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.
- 4:1** Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,
- 4:2** that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.
- 4:3** For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles--when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.
- 4:4** In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.
- 4:5** They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.
- 4:6** For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.
- 4:7** But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.
- 4:8** And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."
- 4:9** Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.
- 4:10** As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.
- 4:11** If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.
- 4:12** Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;
- 4:13** but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.
- 5:6** Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,
- 5:7** casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

NKJV SCRIPTURE Continued

- 5:8** Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.
- 5:9** Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.
- 5:10** But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.
- 5:11** To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.
- 5:14** Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

CHARACTER Definitions

PETER - Simon Peter, also known as Cephas, was one of the first followers of Jesus Christ. He was an outspoken and ardent disciple, one of Jesus' closest friends, an apostle, and a pillar of the church.

Peter was enthusiastic, strong-willed, impulsive, and, at times, brash. But for all his strengths, Peter had several failings in his life. Still, the Lord who chose him continued to mold him into exactly who He intended Peter to be.

Simon was originally from Bethsaida and lived in Capernaum, both cities on the coast of the Sea of Galilee. He was married, and he and James and John were partners in a profitable fishing business.

Simon met Jesus through his brother Andrew, who had followed Jesus after hearing John the Baptist proclaim that Jesus was the Lamb of God. Andrew immediately went to find his brother to bring him to Jesus.

Upon meeting Simon, Jesus gave him a new name: Cephas (Aramaic) or Peter (Greek), which means rock. Later, Jesus officially called Peter to follow Him, producing a miraculous catch of fish. Immediately, Peter left everything behind to follow the Lord.

For the next three years, Peter lived as a disciple of the Lord Jesus. Being a natural-born leader, Peter became the de facto spokesman for the Twelve. More significantly, it was Peter who first confessed Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, a truth which Jesus said was divinely revealed to Peter.

Peter was part of the inner circle of Jesus' disciples, along with James and John. Only those three were present when Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus and when Jesus was transfigured on the mountain. Peter and John were given the special task of preparing the final Passover meal.

In several instances, Peter showed himself to be impetuous to the point of rashness. For example, it was Peter who left the boat to walk on the water to Jesus and promptly took his eyes off Jesus and began to sink.

It was Peter who took Jesus aside to rebuke Him for speaking of His death and was swiftly corrected by the Lord. It was Peter who suggested erecting three tabernacles to honor Moses, Elijah, and Jesus and fell to the ground in fearful silence at God's glory.

CHARACTERS Continued

It was Peter who drew his sword and attacked the servant of the high priest and was immediately told to sheath his weapon. It was Peter who boasted that he would never forsake the Lord, even if everyone else did and later denied three times that he even knew the Lord.

Through all of Peter's ups and downs, the Lord Jesus remained his loving Lord and faithful Guide. Jesus reaffirmed Simon as Peter, the Rock, in Matthew 16:18-19, promising that he would be instrumental in establishing Jesus' Church.

After His resurrection, Jesus specifically named Peter as one who needed to hear the good news. And, repeating the miracle of the large catch of fish, Jesus made a special point of forgiving and restoring Peter and re-commissioning him as an apostle.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter was the main speaker to the crowd in Jerusalem, and the Church began with an influx of about 3,000 new believers. Later, Peter healed a lame beggar and preached boldly before the Sanhedrin. Even arrest, beatings, and threats could not dampen Peter's resolve to preach the risen Christ.

Jesus' promise that Peter would be foundational in building the Church was fulfilled in three stages: Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. Then, he was present when the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit.

Finally, he was summoned to the home of the Roman centurion Cornelius, who also believed and received the Holy Spirit. In this way, Peter unlocked three different worlds and opened the door of the Church to Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles.

Even as an apostle, Peter experienced some growing pains. At first, he had resisted taking the gospel to Cornelius, a Gentile. However, when he saw the Romans receive the Holy Spirit in the same manner he had, Peter concluded that God does not show favoritism.

After that, Peter strongly defended the Gentiles' position as believers and was adamant that they did not need to conform to Jewish law. Another episode of growth in Peter's life concerns his visit to Antioch, where he enjoyed the fellowship of Gentile believers.

However, when some legalistic Jews arrived in Antioch, Peter, to appease them, withdrew from the Gentile Christians. The Apostle Paul saw this as hypocrisy and called it such to Peter's face.

Later in life, Peter spent time with John Mark, who wrote the gospel of Mark based on Peter's remembrances of his time with Jesus. Peter wrote two inspired epistles, 1 and 2 Peter, between A.D. 60 and 68.

Jesus said that Peter would die a martyr's death a prophecy fulfilled, presumably, during Nero's reign. Tradition has it that Peter was crucified upside down in Rome, and, although such the story may be true, there is no scriptural or historical witness to the particulars of Peter's death.

Jesus overcomes fear. Whether stepping out of a boat onto a tossing sea or stepping across the threshold of a Gentile home for the first time, Peter found courage in following Christ. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear.

CHARACTERS Continued

Jesus forgives unfaithfulness. After he had boasted of his fidelity, Peter fervently denied the Lord three times. It seemed that Peter had burned his bridges, but Jesus lovingly rebuilt them and restored Peter to service.

Peter was a former failure, but, with Jesus, failure is not the end. If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

Jesus patiently teaches. Over and over, Peter needed correction, and the Lord gave it with patience, firmness, and love. The Master Teacher looks for students willing to learn. I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go.

Jesus sees us as He intends us to be. The very first time they met, Jesus called Simon Peter. The rough and reckless fisherman was, in Jesus' eyes, a firm and faithful rock. He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion.

Jesus uses unlikely heroes. Peter was a fisherman from Galilee, but Jesus called him to be a fisher of men. Because Peter was willing to leave all he had to follow Jesus, God used him in great ways.

As Peter preached, people were amazed at his boldness because he was unschooled and ordinary. But then they took note that Peter had been with Jesus. Being with Jesus makes all the difference.

BIBLE TIMELINE

64 AD

Peter Writes his First Letter

1 Peter 1 - 5

MAP REFERENCES

