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THE HOLY BIBLE **NKJV** REFERENCE GUIDE

NEW TESTAMENT

BOOK 62

1 JOHN



St. John On Patmos by Caspar de Crayer

SUMMARY

The author of this epistle never identified himself by name, but Christians since the beginning of the church have considered this letter authoritative, believing it was written by John the apostle.

That group of witnesses includes Polycarp, an early second-century bishop who as a young man knew John personally. In addition, the author clearly places himself as part of a group of apostolic eyewitnesses to the life and ministry of Jesus, noting that what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also.

John did not specify the recipients of this letter, but given his addresses in Revelation 2–3 to seven churches in the immediate vicinity of Ephesus—the city where John ministered late in his life—he likely had those same churches in mind for this letter.

The letter offers little in the way of specifics, so pinpointing the date of its composition can be difficult. However, its similarity with the gospel composed by John means it was probably written near the same time. A date of about AD 90, with John writing from his exile on Patmos, ends up being the best proposition.

The parallelisms in 1 John are striking for their simplicity: Christ vs. antichrists, light vs. darkness, truth vs. falsehood, righteousness vs. sin, love of the Father vs. love of the world, and the Spirit of God vs. the spirit of the Antichrist.

While this is not a complete list, it reveals a letter that presents the world in an uncomplicated way—there is right and there is wrong, period. This emphasis by John, while striking, is not without love.

It's quite the opposite, in fact. John recognized that love comes from God, and he encouraged the believers to love one another. John's first epistle teaches that while it is important to recognize the lines between truth and error, it must always be done in a spirit of love.

As he did in his gospel, John stated with clarity the purpose of his first letter. He proclaimed the good news about Jesus to the recipients of this letter, saying so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Later, John added so that you may not sin and so that you may know that you have eternal life. John wanted his readers to experience true fellowship with God and with God's people. But he knew that would not happen until the Christians set aside their own selfish desires in favor of the pursuits God had for them.

To help them attain that goal, John focused on three issues: the zeal of the believers, standing firm against false teachers, and reassuring the Christians that they have eternal life.

John wrote to churches full of people who had struggled with discouragement—whether due to their own sinful failures or the presence of false teachers in their midst.

The aging apostle hoped to ignite the zeal of these believers so that they might follow the Lord more closely and stand firm against those who meant to sow discord among

SUMMARY Continued

the churches. In doing so, they would solidify their relationship with God and gain confidence in His work in their lives.

We all go through ups and downs in our Christian faith. Whatever the struggle whether outside of us or inside, we often feel ourselves blown about by the winds of emotion or circumstances.

Yet God calls us to lives of increasing consistency, with the evidence of our inner transformation becoming more and more apparent as the months and years pass by. How would you characterize your relationship with God, consistent and fruitful or sporadic and parched?

John knew that we would never find in ourselves the faithfulness God requires. Instead, we have to place complete trust in the work and grace of God, believing that He will certainly conform us to the image of His Son, Jesus.

That sense of being grounded in God only comes when we set aside our sin in the pursuit of the one true God. Or, in the words of John, if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

False spiritual teachers were a big problem in the early church. Because there was not a complete New Testament that believers could refer to, many churches fell prey to pretenders who taught their own ideas and advanced themselves as leaders.

John wrote this letter to set the record straight on some important issues, particularly concerning the identity of Jesus Christ. Because John's letter was about the basics of faith in Christ, it helped his readers reflect honestly on their faith.

It helped them answer the question, Are we true believers? John told them that they could tell by looking at their actions. If they loved one another, that was evidence of God's presence in their lives.

But if they bickered and fought all the time or were selfish and did not look out for one another, they were betraying that they, in fact, did not know God. That did not mean they had to be perfect.

In fact, John also recognized that believing involved admitting our sins and seeking God's forgiveness. Depending on God for cleansing from guilt, along with admitting our wrongs against others and making amends, was another important part of getting to know God.

One of the most often-quoted passages regarding sin is found in 1 John 2:16. In this passage, John describes the three aspects of sin that recall the first and most earth-shattering temptations in all of Scripture.

The first sin, the disobedience of Eve, was the result of her yielding to the same three temptations as we find in Genesis 3:6: the lust of the flesh ("good for food"); the lust of the eyes ("pleasing to the eye"); and the pride of life ("desirable for gaining wisdom").

The Book of 1 John is a book of love and joy. It explains the fellowship we have with others and with Jesus Christ.

SUMMARY Continued

It differentiates between happiness, which is temporary and fleeting, and true joy, which 1 John tells us how to achieve. If we take the words written by John and we apply them to our daily lives, the true love, commitment, fellowship, and joy we long for will be ours.

The apostle John knew Christ well. He is telling us that we can all have that close, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. We have the witness of men who had direct and personal contact with Him.

The Gospel writers present their solidly based testimony on a historical reality. Now, how does that apply to our lives? It explains to us that Jesus came here as the Son of God to create a union with us based on His grace, mercy, love, and acceptance.

So many times people think Jesus is off in some faraway place and that He doesn't really concern Himself with our daily struggles, issues, and concerns. But John is telling us that Jesus is right here with us in both the simple, mundane parts of our lives and in the complex, soul-wrenching parts as well.

John testifies as a witness of his personal experiences that God became flesh and lived among men. That means Christ came here to live with us and He still lives with us. As He walked the earth alongside John, so does He walk through each and every day with us.

We need to apply this truth to our lives and live as if Jesus were standing right next to us every second of the day. If we put this truth into practice, Christ will add holiness to our lives, making us more and more like Him.

NKJV SELECTED SCRIPTURE

- 1:8** If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
- 1:9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- 1:10** If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.
- 2:3** Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.
- 2:4** He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.
- 2:5** But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.
- 2:6** He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.
- 2:10** He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.
- 2:11** But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.
- 2:15** Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

NKJV SCRIPTURE Continued

- 2:16** For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.
- 2:17** And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.
- 3:1** Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.
- 3:2** Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.
- 3:3** And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.
- 3:8** He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.
- 3:9** Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.
- 3:17** But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?
- 3:22** And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.
- 3:23** And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.
- 4:1** Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.
- 4:2** By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God,
- 4:3** and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.
- 4:4** You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.
- 4:18** There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.
- 4:19** We love Him because He first loved us.
- 5:4** For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith.
- 5:5** Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?
- 5:7** For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.
- 5:8** And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.
- 5:14** Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.
- 5:15** And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.
- 5:16** If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that.

NKJV SCRIPTURE Continued

- 5:17** All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death.
- 5:18** We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.
- 5:19** We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.
- 5:20** And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.
- 5:21** Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

BIBLE TIMELINE

90 AD

John Writes his First Letter

1 John 1 - 5

MAP REFERENCES

