

Citing Scripture

Scripture citations sometimes confuse the newcomer, so here is a basic key to the codes.

In the front of your New Jerusalem Bible you will find a table of contents which includes the **accepted abbreviations of the different books**. Please try to stick to them: they're sometimes essential. For instance Ecclesiastes and Ecclesiasticus both start in Eccles, so the shorter of the two is commonly referred to as the book of the Preacher (Heb *Qoheleth*) and given the abbreviation *Qo*. You sometimes see *Ecclus*, which is OK, but more commonly Ecclesiasticus is given the title of its author, Ben Sira, and abbreviated *Si*.

Some books come in multiples: there are two books of Samuel and of Kings and Chronicles, and two letters to Thessalonica, three letters of John, etc.

The number of the book is vital, so it always comes first: **1K, 2Th, 3Jn**.

(The number before the Letters of John is particularly important, because plain **Jn** always means the Gospel.)

Add a space, and then refer to **chapters** if any (Obadiah, 2 & 3Jn and Jude have no chapters).

1K 5

if a series of chapters, a *spaced hyphen* between the numbers:

1K 5 - 7 means chapters 5,6, and 7

if several separate chapters, give them *commas* to separate them:

1K 5, 7, 10 - 12

Then come the verses, which can bristle a bit: do them without spacing, to distinguish them from chapters:

1K 5:21-26

but you might want a couple of other verses as well

1K 5:21-26, 28, 31-32

Professional scholars often use a bit of shorthand: eg the letter *f*:

1K 5:21f means verse 21 and the following verse:

1K 5:21ff means verse 21 onwards - to the next natural break.

and in verses of some complexity *a b c* etc are used to refer to different phrases within a verse; where an editor has forced two or more elements together, as often in the Pentateuch, it is sometimes instructive to look at the bits separately. Equally it's useful in Pauline letters, where the sentences in a single verse can be quite extended.

