

Recurring Names

Explanation

In the Judeo-Christian world of the first century, surnames were seldom used except by Romans. In keeping with the customs of the time, reference to individuals in the New Testament is usually made using only their given name or occasionally some other identifying factor such as filiation (who their father was, e.g., James the son of Zebedee) or provenance (place of origin, e.g., Mary of Magdala or Mary Magdalene). Such imprecise references produce a great deal of confusion about the identity of several individuals.

The following three charts differentiate, as much as possible, between the Marys mentioned in the New Testament, as well as the Jameses and the Johns. Among these people are some of the most important figures in early Christianity.

References

- Raymond F. Collins, et al., "Mary," *ABD*, 4:579–82.
- Camille Fronk, "Mary, Mother of Jesus," *EM*, 2:863–64.
- C. Wilfred Griggs, "John the Beloved," *EM*, 2:757–58.
- Loui Novak, "John the Baptist," *EM*, 2:755–57.
- R. Douglas Phillips, "James the Apostle," *EM*, 2:716–17.

The Johns

NAME	IDENTIFICATION	DESCRIPTION
John	the Baptist	A relative of Jesus and forerunner of his ministry, declared by the Savior to be the greatest prophet born of woman (Lk 7:28).
John	the Beloved, the Apostle, the Evangelist, the Revelator	These names refer to the same individual—John, son of Zebedee and brother of James. With Andrew, the first called by the Savior as a disciple (Jn 1:37–40), John became known as the beloved disciple. Later ordained an apostle, John was found with Peter and his own brother James in the inner circle of three privileged to accompany the Savior on sacred occasions including the raising of Jairus’s daughter, the transfiguration, and in Gethsemane. On the cross Christ entrusted his mother, Mary, to the care of John, and it was John who joined Peter in exercising leadership in Jerusalem after the ascension of the Lord. Later John is known to have gone to preside over the large Christian community at Ephesus. John received the book of Revelation in approximately A.D. 96 while on Patmos off the coast of Ephesus and was thereafter known as John the Revelator. Later from his residence at Ephesus John wrote his epistles and the Gospel (<i>evangelion</i>) from which derived his title, John the Evangelist. After the death of Peter, John exercised authority as the presiding officer of the church until, as revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith (D&C 7), he was transfigured. With Peter and James, John restored the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood to Joseph Smith.
John Mark		Generally known as Mark, he was author of the Gospel that bears his name. Relative of Barnabas who accompanied Paul to Rome (Col 4:10) and Peter to Babylon (1Pt 5:13), Peter was probably the source for Mark’s Gospel. After Peter’s death, Mark is traditionally held to have founded the Christian community at Alexandria in Egypt.