

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 Marys

NAME	IDENTIFICATION	DESCRIPTION
Mary	mother of Jesus	Bore and raised Jesus (Mt 1–2; Lk 2) Was with Jesus at the wedding at Cana (Jn 2) Accompanied Jesus during his ministry (Mt 12:46; Mk 3:31; Lk 8:19) Witnessed Jesus' crucifixion (Jn 19) Was with the apostles after the ascension (Acts 1:14)
Mary Magdalene	a dear friend of Jesus	Healed by Jesus (Lk 8:2) Provided financially for Jesus and the Twelve Accompanied Jesus to Jerusalem Witnessed Jesus' death, burial, and was the first to witness the resurrection (Mt 27:56–28:8; Mk 15:40, 47; 16:1, 9; Lk 24:10; Jn 19:25; 20:14–18)
Mary of Bethany	sister of Martha and Lazarus	Listened to Jesus while Martha tended to household duties (Lk 10:39, 42) Sent for Jesus after the death of Lazarus, witnessed the raising of Lazarus, and testified of Jesus (Jn 11:1–45) Anointed Jesus (Jn 12:3–8)
Mary	mother of James	Followed Jesus during his and Joseph's Galilean ministry and possibly provided him financial support (Mk 15:40, 47; 16:1) Witnessed Jesus' crucifixion, burial, and resurrection (Mt 27:56)
Mary	a follower of Jesus	Possibly a relative of Jesus Married to a man named Cleopas (Jn 19:25)
Mary	mother of John Mark	Gave her home in Jerusalem, as a well-to-do widow, a regular place for the saints to gather and pray (Acts 12:12)
Mary	a Roman Christian	Received greetings from Paul because she had served well in Rome (Rom 16:6)