

Resource: Key Terms (SRV)

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Key Terms (SRV)

J

James, James, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jew, Jew, John, John, John the Baptist, John the Baptist, Jordan River, Jordan River, Judea, Judea, justice, justice

James

There are three people in the New Testament with the name **James**.

One of Jesus's disciples was named James. James had a brother named John, and his father's name was Zebedee. James and John were fishermen, until Jesus called them to become his disciples. Together with Peter, another disciple, these three men were often with Jesus at special times. From Jesus's 12 disciples, these three people were the closest to Jesus.

At one time, Jesus called James and his brother John "sons of thunder." It could be that Jesus gave them this name because they had a temper, and got angry quickly. But we do not know this for sure.

In the book of Acts we hear that the king Herod Agrippa has James killed.

There was another disciple of Jesus called James. He is called James, the son of Alpheus, or "James the less." "James the less" was probably a nickname that people gave to him because he was either younger or shorter than the other disciple named James.

Another James is a brother of Jesus-a son of Jesus's mother Mary and her husband Joseph. This James did not at first believe that God sent Jesus. But after Jesus rose from the dead, James started to believe in Jesus. James became an important leader in the early church, and he is probably the author of the book of James, which is in the New Testament.

James

Audio Content

Jerusalem

Jerusalem is the name of the most important city of the Jewish people. The temple of God, where the Jews worshiped God, was in Jerusalem. The Jews traveled to Jerusalem several times a year to celebrate important festivals in the temple. The Jewish religious court, the Sanhedrin, also gathered in Jerusalem.

About a thousand years before Jesus was born, king David established the city of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. About 500 years later, the enemies of the Israelites destroyed the city, but the Israelites built it up again. The Jewish people loved the city of Jerusalem very much.

Jerusalem was part of the province called Judea. Jerusalem was built on a hill. Therefore people always said they were going "up to Jerusalem."

Jerusalem

Audio Content

Jew

Jews refers to the people who are descendants of Abraham. In order to understand the word Jews, you first have to understand the word Israelites.

Israelites are descendants of Abraham. Abraham was a man who lived about 2000 years before the birth of Jesus. When Abraham was 75 years old, God spoke to him. God told him to leave behind his homeland, and to go to a place that God would show him. God said that he would bless Abraham, that he would make a great nation out of him, and that God would bless all the nations of the world through Abraham. Abraham obeyed God and God led him to the region that was at that time called Canaan. God promised Abraham that God would

give this land to Abraham's descendants. Abraham and his wife did not have any children, but when Abraham and his wife were already very old, God gave them a son. This was the beginning of God fulfilling his promise to Abraham.

Abraham's son Isaac had two sons, one of them was named Jacob. God later gave Jacob the name Israel. From that time onwards, all Abraham's descendants are going to be called Israelites.

Because God has made a promise to Abraham, the Israelites were God's special people. Later, God made a covenant with them, which is a promise with a special agreement. The agreement was that the Israelites would obey all God's commandments, and God would bless them and make them a blessing for all the people on the earth.

The land where the Israelites lived was called Israel. The Israelites were ruled by kings. At first this went well, and the kingdom of Israel became large and prosperous. But very soon, there was conflict, and the nation of Israel split in two parts. The Northern part was still called Israel, and the Southern part was called Judah. The northern part, Israel, was defeated by a nation called the Assyrians about 700 years before the birth of Jesus. This happened because the people were continuously disobeying God, and breaking the covenant. God allowed the king of the Assyrians to send most of the people from Israel away to foreign countries. This was the end of the northern kingdom. We never hear anything more about what happened to these people.

The kingdom of Judah lasted a little bit longer, but after some years God also punished them for their disobedience. Another foreign nation, the Babylonians, came and destroyed the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the most important city for the people of Judah because this was where the temple was where they worshiped God. The Babylonians took many of the people from Judah to Babylon as prisoners. The people from Judah were now called Jews, which just means "people from Judah."

Later, God allowed the Jews to go back to Judah, where they rebuilt the city of Jerusalem and the temple. But Judah would never become an independent nation again. In the time of the New Testament, another nation named the Roman Empire was ruling over the area that had been Israel. What had been the southern kingdom of Judah, was now called the Roman province of Judea. What had been the northern kingdom of

Israel, was now almost the same as the Roman provinces of Samaria and Galilee. The word "Jews" began to refer to all remaining descendants of Abraham, no matter where they lived.

And so, the word "Israelites" and the word "Jews" both refer to descendants of Abraham. The word "Jews" occurs especially in the New Testament, and in the later parts of the Old Testament.

In general, when people use the word "Israelites," they may be thinking especially about the people who live in the country of Israel. And when they use the word "Jews," they may be thinking especially about the people who are devoted to the God of Abraham, and who want to keep the covenant that God has made with Abraham's descendants. So, the word "Jews" sometimes has a more religious meaning.

In the Gospels-the four books in the New Testament that tell us about the life of Jesus-almost all the people we meet are Jews: Jesus, his disciples, and most of the people who listen to him are all Jews. But in the book of John the word "Jew" is used in a special way. When the writer of the Gospel of John talks about Jews, he particularly means the *religious leaders* of the Jews. Usually this means people who are opposed to Jesus.

Jew

Audio Content

John

John was one of the disciples of Jesus. He was the brother of James, another disciple, and their father's name was Zebedee. James and John were fishermen before Jesus called them to become his disciples. Together with Peter, another disciple, these three men were often with Jesus at special times, even when other disciples were not there.

At one time, Jesus called James and his brother John "sons of thunder." It could be that Jesus gave them this name because they had a temper, and got angry quickly. But we do not know for sure.

The disciple John is probably also the writer of the gospel of John, the epistles of John, and Revelation-all books in the New Testament. He probably lived the longest of all the disciples of Jesus. When he was already quite old, the Roman authorities sent

him as a prisoner to an island called Patmos, where God gave him the visions that we can hear about in the book Revelation.

John

Audio Content

John the Baptist

John the baptizer, or John the Baptist, was the person who told the people to repent of their sins and to take a special bath called baptism as a sign of their repentance. John did this shortly before Jesus began his own work.

John's parents were Zechariah and Elizabeth. John's birth was quite special. His parents were already very old when he was born. John was their only child.

John's father, Zechariah, was a priest and served God in the temple in Jerusalem. One time, when Zechariah was in the temple, an angel appeared to Zechariah and told him that his wife Elizabeth would have a son. This son would be a servant of God like the prophet Elijah had been, and he would tell the people of Israel to repent, in order to prepare the people to receive God. Zechariah could not believe that what the angel said was true, because Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth were already so old. Because Zechariah did not believe the angel, the angel told Zechariah that he would be unable to speak until after the birth of the child.

And of course, it happened exactly as the angel had said. Elizabeth became pregnant, even though she was already so old. She gave birth to John.

When John grew up, he went to live in the wilderness, in a lonely place away from people, near the Jordan River. He ate only what was available in the wilderness—honey and locusts. He wore very simple clothes made out of rough camel hair. By looking at his clothes, people were reminded of the prophet Elijah. And many people came to John to listen to what he had to say. John told the people that another person would come after him, who was much more important than John was. John was preparing the people to receive this person, by telling them to repent of their sins and to start obeying God. The person that John was talking about was Jesus.

John told the people to take a special bath named baptism. This was a ritual that showed the people that they really repented from their sins. Sometimes, people who were not Jews but still wanted to follow God, took baptism. But John told them that they *all* had to take baptism! Even though the people were Jews, and therefore God's special people, they still did many wrong things and needed to repent. They needed to tell God that they felt sorry for disobeying God, and that they wanted to change.

Without any fear, John the baptizer told the people openly what they did wrong. The religious teachers of the Jews did not like John. During this time, King Herod Antipas was ruling over Judea. This was a son of the King Herod who had tried to kill Jesus when he was a baby. Herod Antipas was living together with the wife of his brother, and John openly told him that this was wrong. This woman was angry with John because of this, and tried to kill him, but King Herod had respect for John and did not want to kill him. But the king did put John in prison, and one time during a party, the king's wife tricked king Herod, and he was forced to have John killed. The king's soldiers cut off John's head to kill him.

John the baptizer was a relative of Jesus. His mother Elizabeth was a cousin of Jesus's mother Mary.

John the Baptist

Audio Content

Jordan River

The **Jordan River** is a long river that runs through Israel from north to south. During the rainy season the river is quite wide and deep. At other times of the year the river is smaller, and a person can get across the river by wading or swimming through the water. At two places, the river passes a large lake: first the Lake-or sea-of Galilee, and later the Dead Sea. The Lake of Galilee has sweet water and there are many fish in the lake; but the Dead Sea has saltwater, and the water is so salty that no fish can live in it. The Jordan River stops at the Dead Sea.

The Jordan River was very important for the Jews. It was important because the people needed the

water of the river, but also because when the Israelites had first entered the land, they had to cross this Jordan River. It was the time of the rains, and the river was very deep and wide at the time. But God did a miracle and stopped the water in the river, and the people of Israel could safely walk across the bottom of the river to the other side.

You may want to first look up the Jordan River in the video Bible dictionary.

Jordan River

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Judea

Judea is the name of a region in Israel in the time of the New Testament.

In the time of Jesus, Israel was not an independent nation. The Israelites were ruled by the Roman people. The Romans had divided Israel into several regions, or provinces. These provinces were Judea in the south, Galilee in the north, and Samaria in the middle.

Judea was the place where the most important city was, Jerusalem, and the temple of God. The people in Judea often thought that they were better Jews than the people in Galilee. They looked down on the people in Galilee, thinking of them as uneducated and rough. The people in Judea and Galilee looked down on people in Samaria, whom they considered not to be Jews at all.

The area that is Judea in the New Testament is called Judah in the Old Testament.

Judea

Audio Content

justice

Justice is when someone treats someone else fairly according to the law. When justice is happening in an entire society, then everybody treats each other equally and fairly. In a just society, people in authority punish those who do wrong and protect people who are poor and weak.

justice

Audio Content