

## The Jamiekán Speakers of the Caribbean



Representative photo

Just 90 miles south of Cuba lies Jamaica, the third-largest island in the Caribbean Sea. Early explorers there encountered mountainous terrain laced with raging rivers, turbulent waterfalls, wild forests, hidden caves, glorious bays and pristine beaches.

Christianity arrived in Jamaica with Columbus in the 1490s, fostering an eventual blending of Arawak, African, British and Spanish traditions. Today, most Jamaicans would consider themselves Christians, more than half affiliating with Protestant denominations.

Although Jamaica is known for plush amenities and accessible beaches, the average Jamaican lives in a country where several traditional cultures meet. Traditional Jamaican life is marked by many life-stage customs. Weddings are outwardly similar to Western weddings with white bridal dresses and church ceremonies. However, a traditional Jamaican wedding starts the day before with a long feast. Friends play games and eat until dawn when they leave to prepare for the church ceremony. On the Sunday following the wedding, called “Tun T’anks Sunday,” the wedding party attends church together and holds an even larger party.

Funerals are similarly lavish. Friends and relatives drink coffee, share food and sing hymns with the family for nine nights after the death. This practice both comforts the family and, some believe, protects them from the spirit of the dead one. After the ninth night, they expect the spirit to be at rest.

In urban areas, unemployment and crime are increasing problems. But despite their turbulent history — or perhaps because of it — Jamaicans reflect resiliency and relaxation in the face of challenges. The nation’s music, sports and tourism industries showcase her as a cultural superpower.

Jamiekán or Jamaican Creole English is also spoken and understood in Costa Rica, Panama and is very similar to the creoles spoken in many other Caribbean nations.

**Primary Religion:**

Christianity

**Disciples (Matt 28:19):**

Unknown

**Churches:**

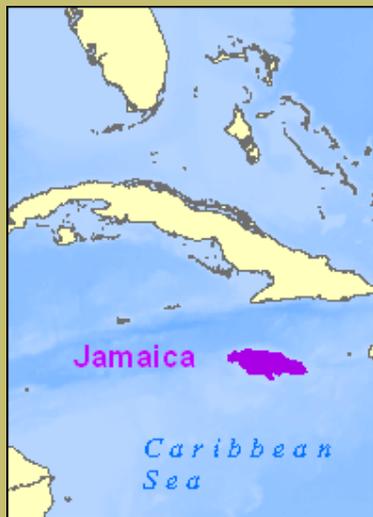
Yes

**Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):**

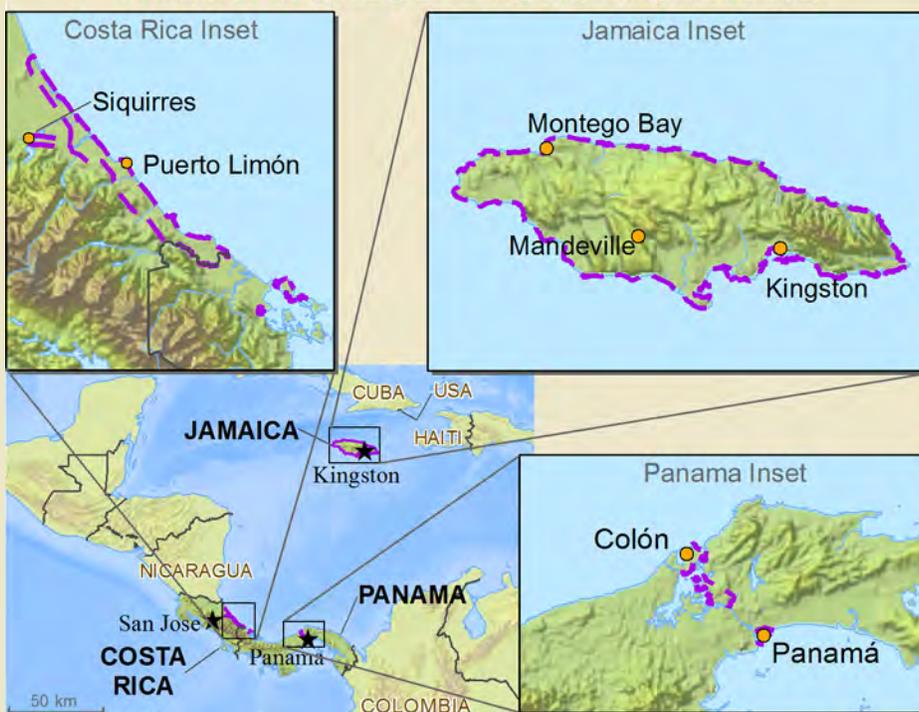
30-50 Psalms

**Population (date):**

4 million



### JAMAICAN CREOLE ENGLISH HOMELAND



## The Jamiekan of Jamaica

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### Have They Heard The Gospel?

Is the Word of God Translated?

Jamaicans are a vibrant, friendly and strong people. At the same time, however, the island is besieged by a number of grave ills: the nation is being stifled by corruption, crime and violence are rampant, unemployment and poverty are on the increase and the poor and weak are exploited.

The people for whom a translation of the Bible is being done are included in the translation project from the start.

Targeting Christians both on the island itself and throughout the Jamaican diaspora, the translators will be seeking a broad range of input as they draft and check 30 to 50 selected Psalms. They plan to further publicize the Jamiekan New Testament along with this Old Testament material, garnering new interest through social media channels.

The Language

The basilect and standard English are mutually inherently unintelligible. Jamiekan may be partly intelligible to speakers of Cameroon Pidgin [wes] and Krio [kri] of Sierra Leone, spoken by descendants of Jamaicans who were repatriated between 1787 and 1860. It is inherently intelligible to creole speakers in Panama and Costa Rica. It is reportedly very similar to Belize Creole [bzj], similar to Grenada, Saint Vincent, different from Tobago, very different from Guyana, Barbados, Leeward and Windward islands.

It is a dominant language and gaining in prestige. There is a continuum in the way it is spoken from distinct Creole to the provincial English of town dwellers. Attitudes toward it are positive. Most consider that they speak standard English [eng].

Linguistic influences are from Akan [aka] languages in Ghana and Bantu languages of other African nations.

## The Jamiekán of Jamaica

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### Status of Christianity

#### Religion and Response

##### Need for Translation

Of the sixty-six books of the Bible, the Psalms are the favorite of Jamaicans. In them they find comfort, refuge. The translation of these Psalms would allow the crowd to grow in its understanding of that language as well as the official language; and furthermore, it could provide mother-tongue poetry that musicians and artists will incorporate into their art. It will give Christians, patterns for more intimate language in prayer, and offer churches material for responsive readings and other liturgical expression.