

## Bible Background

Herod Agrippa I was the grandson of Herod the Great (the king who tried to kill baby Jesus in Bethlehem). He was the nephew of Herod Antipas who put Jesus on trial and agreed with his execution. He was the Jewish king over Jerusalem. This event happened in 44 A.D. a few years after Jesus' death and resurrection. At this time, many Jews who didn't follow Jesus were beginning to persecute the Jews who did follow Jesus. Christians at this time were both from Jewish backgrounds and Gentile backgrounds. They usually met in large homes because they were not accepted in the Jewish synagogues and no church buildings had been built yet.

## Acts 12

<sup>1</sup> About this time, King Herod arrested some people who belonged to the church. He planned to make them suffer greatly. <sup>2</sup> He had James killed with a sword. James was John's brother. <sup>3</sup> Herod saw that the death of James pleased the Jews. So he arrested Peter also. This happened during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. <sup>4</sup> After Herod arrested Peter, he put him in prison. Peter was placed under guard. He was watched by four groups of four soldiers each. Herod planned to put Peter on public trial. It would take place after the Passover Feast. <sup>5</sup> So Peter was kept in prison. But the church prayed hard to God for him.

<sup>6</sup> It was the night before Herod was going to bring him to trial. Peter was sleeping between two soldiers. Two chains held him there. Lookouts stood guard at the entrance. <sup>7</sup> Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared. A light shone in the prison cell. The angel struck Peter on his side. Peter woke up. "Quick!" the angel said. "Get up!" The chains fell off Peter's wrists. <sup>8</sup> Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." Peter did so. "Put on your coat," the angel told him. "Follow me." <sup>9</sup> Peter followed him out of the prison. But he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening. He thought he was seeing a vision. <sup>10</sup> They passed the first and second guards. Then they came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself. They went through it. They walked the length of one street. Suddenly the angel left Peter.

<sup>11</sup> Then Peter realized what had happened. He said, "Now I know for sure that the Lord sent his angel. He set me free from Herod's power. He saved me from everything the Jewish people were hoping for." <sup>12</sup> When Peter understood what had happened, he went to Mary's house. Mary was the mother of John Mark. Many people had gathered in her home. They were praying there. <sup>13</sup> Peter knocked at the outer entrance. A servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. <sup>14</sup> She recognized Peter's voice. She was so excited that she ran back without opening the door. "Peter is at the door!" she exclaimed. <sup>15</sup> "You're out of your mind," they said to her. But she kept telling them it was true. So they said, "It must be his angel."

<sup>16</sup> Peter kept on knocking. When they opened the door and saw him, they were amazed. <sup>17</sup> Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet. He explained how the Lord had brought him out of prison. "Tell James and the others about this," he said. Then he went to another place.

<sup>18</sup> In the morning the soldiers were bewildered. They couldn't figure out what had happened to Peter. <sup>19</sup> So Herod had them look everywhere for Peter. But they didn't find him. Then Herod questioned the guards closely. He ordered that they be put to death.

Scripture taken from the Holy Bible,  
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Picture taken from  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Paintings\\_with\\_biblical\\_themes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Paintings_with_biblical_themes).

## DELIVERANCE OF SAINT PETER circa 1514

Artist: Raphael

Location: Fresco in Apostolic Palace, Vatican City



*The fresco shows three scenes in symmetrical balance formed by the feigned architecture and stairs. In the centre the angel wakes Peter, and on the right guides him past the sleeping guards. On the left side one guard has apparently noticed the light generated by the angel and wakes a comrade, pointing up to the miraculously illumined cell. This adds drama to the serene exit of Peter at the right.*

--Taken from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deliverance\\_of\\_Saint\\_Peter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deliverance_of_Saint_Peter)

1. In the fresco, what are some of the unusual actions that are portrayed?
2. Who seems to be the main character(s) in the painting?
3. What was happening to Christians, the church, and Christian leaders at the beginning of the story?
4. How did the Christians respond to these events (at the beginning of the story)?
5. In the story, what did the angel do?
6. What did the Christians in the church do?
7. What did Peter do?
8. Before Peter saw the angel, what do you think Peter expected to happen? Why do you think this?
9. Before they saw Peter, what do you think the Christians expected to happen? Why do you think this?
10. How did God answer prayers in this story? What do you learn about prayer in this story?
11. How do you think we can pray when we are in a difficult situation?
12. If you were there, how would this event affect your faith in God?