

# Discussion Questions

October 13, 2024

## Acts 12:1-17

### Overcoming Doubt & Disappointment in Prayer



1. Have you ever experienced a time where you were deeply disappointed with God not answering prayer? Please share if appropriate. How did that impact your prayer life afterwards?

#### 2. Read Acts 12:1-17

In verse 6, Peter is found fast asleep just hours before his likely execution. What has changed in Peter since his denial of Jesus to save his skin just a few years before?

Discuss what this kind of trust looks like today. Can we face death with complete trust in God like Peter did?

#### 3. Read Acts 12:12-16

What does the early church's reluctance to believe God had actually answered their prayers tell us about their faith?

How does this relate to our own struggles with doubt in prayer?

4. The church prayed earnestly for Peter, but James had already been killed. How do we reconcile times when God answers prayers with a "yes" versus times when He doesn't?

How do we handle the disappointment of unanswered prayers?

5. The sermon mentioned pride as a barrier to asking for prayer. Why do you think people (including ourselves) often hesitate to ask for prayer?

How can we encourage a more open and supportive prayer culture within our church or community group?

6. The sermon challenged us to pray for bold, miraculous things, rather than just asking for what seems likely to happen. What are some bold prayers that you or your group members feel called to pray, and how can the group support each other in praying for these things?

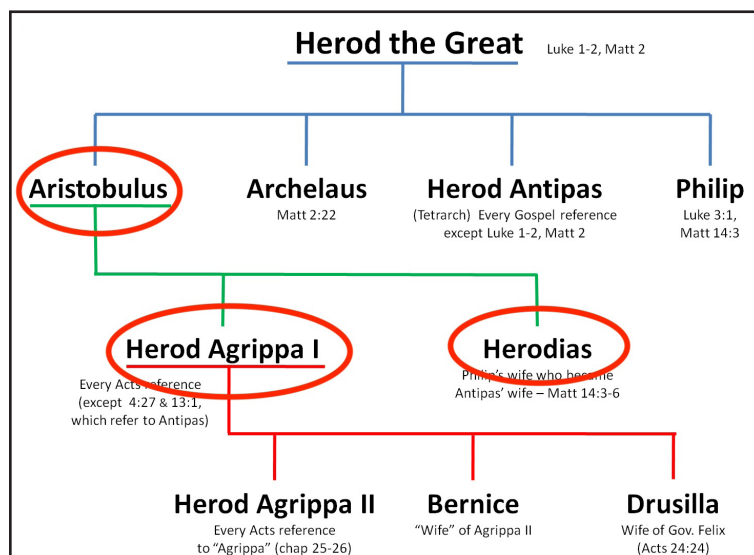
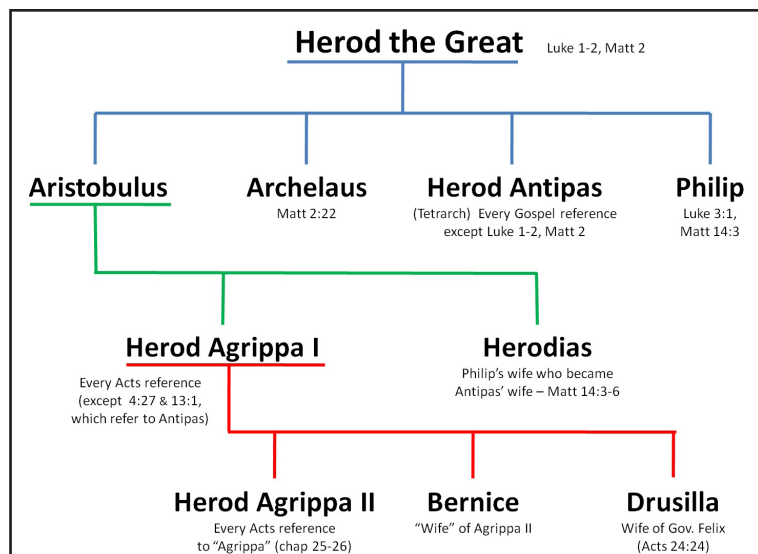
**Acts 12:1-17 (NLT)**

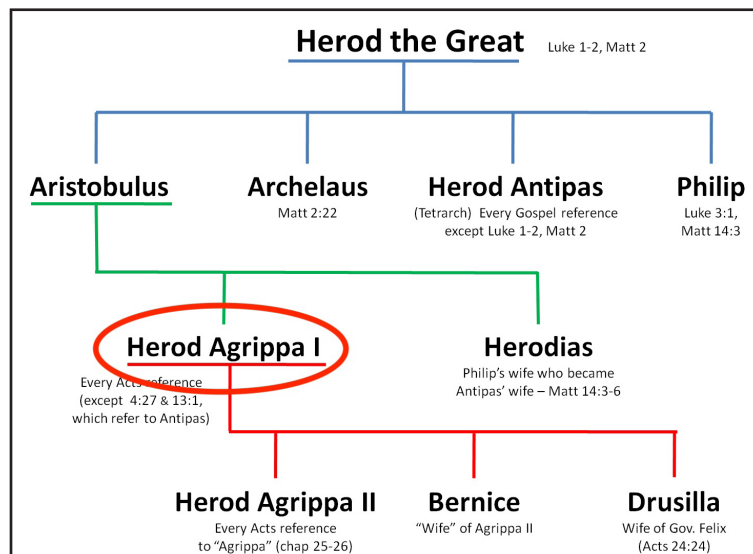
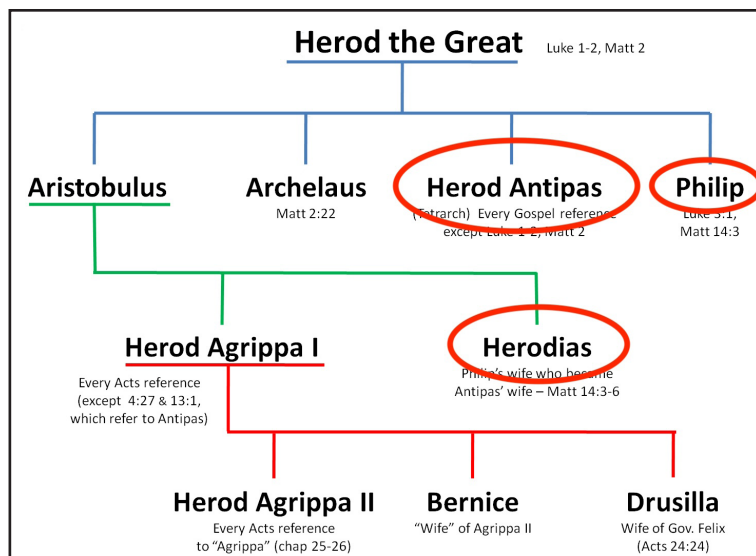
About that time King Herod Agrippa began to persecute some believers in the church. He had the apostle James (John's brother) killed with a sword. When Herod saw how much this pleased the Jewish people, he also arrested Peter. (This took place during the Passover celebration.) Then he imprisoned him, placing him under the guard of four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring Peter out for public trial after the Passover. But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him.

The night before Peter was to be placed on trial, he was asleep, fastened with two chains between two soldiers. Others stood guard at the prison gate. Suddenly, there was a bright light in the cell, and an angel of the Lord stood before Peter. The angel struck him on the side to awaken him and said, "Quick! Get up!" And the chains fell off his wrists. Then the angel told him, "Get dressed and put on your sandals." And he did. "Now put on your coat and follow me," the angel ordered.

So Peter left the cell, following the angel. But all the time he thought it was a vision. He didn't realize it was actually happening. They passed the first and second guard posts and came to the iron gate leading to the city, and this opened for them all by itself. So they passed through and started walking down the street, and then the angel suddenly left him. Peter finally came to his senses. "It's really true!" he said. "The Lord has sent his angel and saved me from Herod and from what the Jewish leaders had planned to do to me!"

When he realized this, he went to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered for prayer. He knocked at the door in the gate, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to open it. When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed that, instead of opening the door, she ran back inside and told everyone, "Peter is standing at the door!" "You're out of your mind!" they said. When she insisted, they decided, "It must be his angel." Meanwhile, Peter continued knocking. When they finally opened the door and saw him, they were amazed. He motioned for them to quiet down and told them how the Lord had led him out of prison. "Tell James and the other brothers what happened," he said. And then he went to another place.





## NT Wright - Acts for Everyone

I find all this strangely comforting: because Luke is allowing us to see the early church for a moment not as a bunch of great heroes and heroines of the faith, but as the same kind of muddled, half-believing, faith-one-minute-and-doubt-the-next sort of people as most Christians we all know.

### Acts 12:22-23 (NLT)

*The people gave him a great ovation, shouting, "It's the voice of a god, not of a man!" Instantly, an angel of the Lord struck Herod with a sickness, because he accepted the people's worship instead of giving the glory to God. So he was consumed with worms and died.*

1. We have to be willing to pray for God to move in miraculous ways.
2. We can't allow discouragement from unanswered prayer prevent us from continually, fervently praying.

## Lloyd Oglivie - Drumbeat of Love

Many of us are afraid of bold prayers because we do not want to be embarrassed by an answer which is less than or different from what we asked. We feel we must protect God's reputation by never getting out on a limb with requests which may not be granted. Our faith is so frail that we feel we cannot afford a disappointment which would snap the thin thread of our hope that He is real, that He hears and answers prayer.