Note: The Church is hit with a second wave of persecution. Unlike the first, which targeted the laity but not their leadership, this one is aimed directly at the apostles. Herod Agrippa ruled Judea A.D. 41-44, and had taken over the persecution of the believers. While Luke does not assign a motive for his execution of James and his intended execution of Peter, the broad background lies in Herod's support of Pharisaic Judaism. The Jewish Christians had lost the popularity they had enjoyed in Jerusalem, perhaps because of suspicions against them traceable to the teaching of Stephen.

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1. Who was the first apostle martyred, and what do you know about him from the Handout Five Herods and Three James, Matt 4:18-22; Matt 17:1; Matt 20:20-28; Mark 5:37; Mark 14:33?

2. Why was Peter arrested, and why do you think it was during the Feast of Unleavened Bread? (Acts 12:3)

3. Describe how strong the guard was that Herod ordered to ensure that Peter would not escape from prison. (Acts 12:4, 6)

4. List the many, almost unbelievable, things that happened to allow Peter to escape. (Acts 12:7-10)

5. What does it mean when the text says the "church" prayed for Peter? (Acts 12:5)

6. In verse 12 we are introduced to another "Mary," the mother of the evangelist Mark.
    a. What evidence is there that she was wealthy and owned a big home? (Acts 12:12-13)

    b. What evidence is there that her home was a gathering place for persecuted Christians in Jerusalem? (Acts 12:12)

7. Why do you think Mary's maid, Rhoda, did not let Peter into the house? Why did the people inside the house not believe her when she told them Peter was at the door? (Acts 12:15)

8. What instruction of Peter indicates that James, a kinsman of Jesus, had become an important figure in the early Church? (Acts 12:17)

9. What actions manifest the frustration and anger of Herod at Peter's escape? (Acts 12:18-19)

10. What was Herod's fate for accepting divine praise? (Acts 12:20-23)