

Who was Rhoda in the Bible?

Rhoda (whose name means “Rose” in Greek) is only mentioned one time in the Bible, in Acts 12, but she played an important role and gave modern believers a powerful example.

In the days of the early church, both the Jews and the Romans were hostile toward Christians, so they often met secretly in houses for prayer and worship. One such house in Jerusalem belonged to Mary, the mother of Mark. Certain tradition states that Mary’s was the same house where the disciples celebrated the Last Supper with Christ.

Rhoda was a servant girl in this house, which was a hub for the growing church. One night, the Christians had gathered in Mary’s house and were “earnestly praying to God” (Acts 12:5) for the life of Peter, who had been arrested by Herod (Acts 12:3-4). Their pleas would have been desperately fervent because James, the brother of John, had just been martyred (Acts 12:2), and Peter was slated for execution.

While the church prayed, God answered. He miraculously delivered Peter from prison: an angel led him out of his cell and through the prison gate, which opened for them to pass (Acts 12:6-10). Upon realizing that he was not dreaming, Peter made his way to a place he knew was safe, Mary’s house (Acts 12:11-12).

When Peter arrived and knocked on the door, the servant girl Rhoda came to answer. She heard Peter’s voice and knew it was he, but in her excitement and joy she forgot to actually open the door. Leaving Peter standing in the night, she rushed to tell everyone else about the miracle outside (Acts 12:14). They did not believe her, though, thinking she was out of her mind (Acts 12:15). When Rhoda was insistent, the believers decided it must be Peter’s “angel”—his guardian angel, perhaps, or his ghost—rather than the answer

to their prayers!

All this time, Peter continued knocking on the door, until, finally, they answered it and were amazed to see Peter there. Rhoda had been telling the truth, never doubting that God had literally answered their prayers. Then Peter told them of his wondrous escape from jail (Acts 12:17).

It's interesting that the church was praying earnestly, yet they did not believe the answer to their prayers when it came. They forgot an important part of prayer, which is looking for an answer. Rhoda was the first one to know of Peter's deliverance, and she carried the joyful message to others. She did not let their doubts stop her from sharing what she knew was true: God had done the impossible. Even in the face of their unbelief, she was unrelenting in her joy. Believers today can take a cue from Rhoda and share the news of what God accomplishes with those around us, remaining joyful in what we know is true.