

Acts 17:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

Analysis

But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy (οἱ ἀπειθοῦντες Ἰουδαῖοι ζηλώσαντες)—The unbelieving Jews were gripped by *zēlos* (Ζῆλος), a jealous rage at Paul's success in Thessalonica. Their theological opposition became mob violence, the pattern throughout Acts (13:45, 14:19, 18:12).

Lewd fellows of the baser sort (ἀγοραίους ἄνδρας πονηρούς)—literally "wicked men of the marketplace," hired thugs from the agora. These were the unemployed rabble, professional agitators willing to riot for pay. The religious establishment weaponized the underclass to suppress the gospel—a pattern seen from Pilate's crowd to modern persecution. Jason's house was targeted because he hosted the missionaries (v. 7), making hospitality a costly act of discipleship.

Historical Context

Thessalonica (modern Thessaloniki) was the capital of Macedonia, a major port city of 200,000 with a significant Jewish community. As a "free city" (civitas libera) under Roman rule, it had local autonomy, making mob violence an effective tactic to pressure authorities. Paul's three-week ministry there (17:2) had disrupted the synagogue and converted many God-fearing Greeks (v. 4).

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. When have you seen religious jealousy turn violent or destructive in modern contexts?
2. What does Jason's willingness to shelter Paul despite personal risk teach about the cost of Christian hospitality?

Interlinear Text

Ζηλώσαντες δὲ οἱ ἀπειθοῦντες Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ
moved with envy But which believed not the Jews and
G2206 G1161 G3588 G544 G2453 G2532

προσλαβόμενοι τῶν ἀγοραίων τινὰς ἄνδρας πονηροὺς
took unto them of the baser sort certain fellows lewd
G4355 G3588 G60 G5100 G435 G4190

καὶ ὥχλοποιήσαντες ἐθορύβουν τὴν πόλιν ἐπιστάντες τε
and gathered a company and set all the city assaulted and
G2532 G3792 G2350 G3588 G4172 G2186 G5037

τῇ οἰκίᾳ Ἰάσονος ἐζήτουν αὐτοὺς ἀγαγεῖν εἰς τὸν
the house of Jason and sought them to bring out G3588
G3614 G2394 G2212 G846 G71 G1519

δῆμον.
to the people
G1218

Additional Cross-References

Acts 17:13 (Parallel theme): But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.

Galatians 5:26 (Parallel theme): Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

Acts 17:7 (Parallel theme): Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.

Romans 16:21 (Parallel theme): Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you.

Acts 14:2 (Faith): But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.

Galatians 5:21 (Parallel theme): Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Judges 9:4 (Parallel theme): And they gave him threescore and ten pieces of silver out of the house of Baal-berith, wherewith Abimelech hired vain and light persons, which followed him.
