

Acts 17:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

Analysis

And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city—The Greek ἐτάραξαν (etaraxan, "troubled") conveys agitation, stirring up turmoil, the same word used of Jesus troubling the water at Bethesda. The mob's accusation that Christians preached "another king" (v. 7) was politically explosive in a Roman colony where loyalty oaths to Caesar were mandatory.

The **rulers of the city** (τοὺς πολιτάρχας, tous politarchas) were "politarchs"—a uniquely Macedonian civic office Luke accurately identifies. Archaeological inscriptions from Thessalonica confirm this title, vindicating Luke's historical precision. These officials faced a dilemma: Roman law demanded they investigate sedition, yet they found no evidence against Jason. The gospel's claim that Jesus is Lord (κύριος, kyrios) inherently challenged Caesar's claim to that same title—Christianity was politically subversive by its very nature.

Historical Context

Thessalonica was a free city and major port on the Via Egnatia (c. AD 50). As a Roman colony, it enjoyed self-governance but owed absolute loyalty to Caesar. The politarchs walked a dangerous line—failing to suppress sedition could cost the city its privileges, yet false accusations against innocent men violated Roman justice. The charge of treason (maiestas) was the most serious offense in Roman law.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does confessing "Jesus is Lord" challenge the ultimate authorities and ideologies of your culture today?
2. What does it cost you to align with a kingdom "not of this world" when earthly powers demand total allegiance?

Interlinear Text

ἐτάραξαν	δὲ	τὸν	ὄχλον	καὶ	τοὺς	πολιτάρχας
they troubled	And	^{G3588}	the people	and	^{G3588}	the rulers of the city
^{G5015}	^{G1161}		^{G3793}	^{G2532}		^{G4173}
ἀκούοντας	ταῦτα					
when they heard	these things					
^{G191}	^{G5023}					

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org