

Jason

Acts 17:2-9

17:2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,

17:3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

17:4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

17:5 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.

17:6 And when they found them not, they drew **Jason** and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;

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

17:8 And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

17:9 And when they had taken security of **Jason**, and of the other, they let them go.

Rom. 16:21

16:21 Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and **Jason**, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you.

Why don't we know Jason?

If we had been part of the early church in Macedonia or Greece, we probably would have known Jason or at least have heard of him, since Acts 17:1-9 shows that he played a key role in the beginning of the church at Thessalonica, one of the main cities in the region. Now, nearly 2000 years later, however, we only know him through these few verses in Acts chapter 17 and perhaps from Romans 16:21.

Were there many Jasons?

Jason was a common Greek name. But it was also often used by Jews in Bible times, because it sounded somewhat like the Hebrew name Joshua, without being obviously Jewish. So there were many Jasons, and the one in Romans 16:21 may or may not be the same man as the one in Acts chapter 17.

The best evidence that they were the same person are: (1.) the fact that Corinth (where Romans was written) and Thessalonica are fairly close and (2.) the fact that both of them were well-known Jewish believers associated with Paul. In this study, we will assume that they were the same man.

negatives

The Jews in Thessalonica who did not believe in Jesus probably hated Paul (17:5-6, 13). So they were hostile toward Jason as well, since he had hosted the apostle in his home. They may not have hated Jason as much as they hated Paul, however. For sure, there was more involved than just envy.

Hypocritically, the unbelieving Jews—who themselves did not like Caesar—falsely claimed that the Christians were trying to overthrow the Roman government (17:7).

The hostility of the unbelieving Jews is what is stressed in Acts 17:1-15. So some may question whether Jason is an important character in the passage at all. There is an aspect of truth in this. But without seeing what happened to Jason, how can the Jewish hostility be fully appreciated?

Probably one of the conditions for Jason's release (17:9) was for him to stay quietly at home. But this did not mean that he had to stay in Thessalonica forever. (Rom. 16:21)

Mark the points below as correct (C), incorrect (X), or partly correct (▲).

A	() Jason is not well known.
A-1	() He isn't mentioned anywhere else in Acts.
A-2	() He isn't mentioned in 1st or 2nd Thessalonians.
A-3	() Probably he was Jewish, but we don't know for sure.
A-4	() We don't know if he is the same Jason as in Rom. 16:21.
B	() Jason was not well liked.
B-1	() He was hated by the unbelieving Jews.
B-2	() He was an anti-Roman troublemaker (17:7).
B-3	() He probably promised to not cause more trouble (17:9).
B-4	() The city rulers believed what the Jews said about him (17:8).
C	() Jason did not do much.
C-1	() He didn't say anything in 17:6-9.
C-2	() He probably stayed in the city (17:9-10).
C-3	() He probably lost contact with Paul (Rom. 16:21).
C-4	() Acts 17:5-9 is more about unbelieving Jews than about Jason.

positives

A sceptic may ask, “What evidence is there that Jason was a real person?” Perhaps the best answer is that the entire Book of Acts shows that he was real. His name and person fit the Acts 17 context, of course, but more than that, he is just one of many fitting characters throughout the Book.

The original readers of Acts personally knew many of the people named therein, including Jason, since it was written close enough to the events so that the facts could be checked.

Roman Catholic tradition, however, later added much to the biblical account of Jason and created a mythical Saint Jason of Tarsus who never existed. This adding to the Scriptures, of course, encourages disbelief, while a careful reading of the actual biblical account promotes genuine faith.

Finally, another sceptic might ask why the city officials sided with Jason so quickly. Probably it was because they actually knew him and knew what kind of person he was.

Mark the points below as correct (C), incorrect (X), or partly correct (▲).

D	() Jason was a real person.
D-1	() His house was well known.
D-2	() The city rulers knew him well.
D-3	() He was well known in the early churches.
D-4	() He is a Roman Catholic saint, Jason of Tarsus.
E	() Jason was a real help - within the church.
E-1	() He was a wealthy believer.
E-2	() He was an ordinary believer.
E-3	() He hosted Paul and Silas in his home.
E-4	() He worked with other church members (17:7, 9).
F	() Jason was a real help - in the church's outreach.
F-1	() He represented the church with the city officials.
F-2	() He overcame the mob peacefully, without fighting.
F-3	() He played a key role in the growth of the early church.
F-4	() To this day, he helps show the world that Acts is a true account.

worksheet answers

About two-thirds (18 or 19 of 30) of the lines on the worksheets in this study are correct. Most of the fully correct ones are in sections, A, D, E, and F, though line D-4 is wrong. (The real Jason did not live in Tarsus!)

Jason was disliked by the unbelieving Jews in Thessalonica (B-1) of course, but he had friends as well. So the Gentile city leaders probably did not fully believe what his accusers said about him (B-4) and the other Christians. Though the accusations troubled them (17:8), they still released Jason and his friends.

As for the claim that Jason did not do much, at best this is only partly true. As a wealthy believer, he was able to host Paul and Silas in his home (E-3). Moreover, just because nothing he said is recorded, does not prove that he was speechless (C-1). How could he have come to an agreement with the city officials without speaking? It was his words and probably his good reputation (as well as his money) that enabled him to help the church deal with the rulers (17:9). Humanly speaking, the violent mob was overcome peacefully, thanks to Jason (F-2).

So what?

The overall message of the Book of Acts is that the early church grew and prospered despite opposition because God was in it. This is seen in Paul preaching Christ at Thessalonica for three weeks where many believed (17:2-4). But there was also opposition to be faced, and that is where Jason comes in.

Probably it is significant that the part about the persecution (17:5-9) is as long or even longer than the part about Paul's preaching (17:2-4). So, Jason is not a minor character after all, even though he played a supporting role compared to that of the Apostles.

The main points in 17:1-9 are:

- 1.) that Jesus grew his church, and
- 2.) that the Jews were divided and only marginally effective in their opposition. (They only managed to drive Paul from one city to another.)

Jason played a special role in overcoming opposition and shows that God uses and protects his workers even if they are not apostles. Moreover, Jason demonstrates that God sometimes used wealth and social connections.

applications

Apply the points which you believe are most important or seem most needful.
