

Unity Amidst Diversity: The Jerusalem Decree Acts 15:22-41

Keywords and Phrases*

Apostles and the elders (vv. 22, 23)
Brothers (vv. 22, 23, 32, 33, 36, 40)
Church (vv. 22, 41)
Gentiles (v. 23)
Holy Spirit (v. 28)
One accord (v. 25)
Strengthened (vv. 32, 41)

*Keywords may vary depending on Bible translation

Critical Thinking Questions

1. How do the terms “whole church” (v. 22) and “one accord” (v. 25) contribute to our comprehension of this passage?
2. When Paul addressed the Galatians, a congregation grappling with a similar matter, he did not reference the decree from the church council. What might be the most likely reason for this omission?
3. How do Leviticus chapters 17-18 provide insight into the Jewish viewpoint regarding the directive given by the Jerusalem Church?
4. Why did the Jerusalem Church adopt a Greco-Roman style in their letter to Antioch? Additionally, what was the intention behind conveying the message verbally?
5. How does the passage in Acts 15:36-41 bolster the argument for the historical authenticity of the book of Acts?

Analyzing the Scripture

The Church in Jerusalem

- sent Paul, Barnabas, Judas Barsabbas, and Silas to Antioch (v. 22).

Some Persons

- troubled the Gentile Christians with their words (v. 24).
- unsettled the minds of the Gentile Christians (v. 24).
- were not official representatives of the Jerusalem Church (v. 24).

The Decree

- follows Greco-Roman format.
- was sent in writing and by word of mouth (v. 27).
- was inspired by the Holy Spirit (v. 28).
- offered a workable solution for fellowship (v. 29).
- encouraged the Church in Antioch (v. 31).

Judas and Silas

- traveled with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch (v. 22).
- encouraged the Christians with their words (v. 32).

Paul and Barnabas

- stayed in Antioch teaching and preaching (v. 35).
- separated over the issue of John Mark (vv. 36-41).

Reflection Question

How can you make certain that the words you express, both in writing and speaking, will encourage and strengthen your brothers and sisters in Christ?

*"For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you
no greater burden than these requirements."
(Acts 15:28 ESV)*