

Acts 16:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.

Analysis

They delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders (τὰ δόγματα τὰ κεκριμένα)—Paul and his companions disseminated the Jerusalem Council decisions (Acts 15:1-29) throughout the churches. The Greek dogmata refers to authoritative decrees or ordinances, the same word used for imperial edicts (Luke 2:1). The perfect participle kekrimena ("having been decided") emphasizes the binding, settled nature of these apostolic judgments.

This verse demonstrates the early church navigating the transition from Judaism to Christianity. The decrees freed Gentile believers from circumcision while maintaining ethical standards and fellowship unity. Paul's mission was not merely evangelistic but ecclesial—establishing churches under apostolic authority. **Which were at Jerusalem** anchored the decision in the mother church, showing the unity and catholicity of the early Christian movement despite its rapid expansion.

Historical Context

Written circa AD 50-52, this passage describes Paul's second missionary journey shortly after the Jerusalem Council (AD 49). Luke emphasizes how the apostolic decree resolved the circumcision controversy, allowing the church to expand without requiring Gentile converts to become Jewish proselytes. This administrative unity was crucial for the mission to the nations.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does the church today balance theological unity with cultural diversity in the same way the Jerusalem Council did?
2. What role should apostolic authority and historical church decisions play in contemporary Christian practice?

Interlinear Text

ὡς δὲ διεπορεύοντο τῶν πόλεις παρεδίδουν αὐτοῖς
as And they went through which the cities they delivered them
G5613 G1161 G1279 G3588 G4172 G3860 G846

φυλάσσειν τῶν δόγματα τῶν κεκριμένα ὑπὸ τῶν
for to keep which the decrees which that were ordained of which
G5442 G3588 G1378 G3588 G2919 G5259 G3588

ἀποστόλων καὶ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων τῶν ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ
the apostles and which elders which were at Jerusalem
G652 G2532 G3588 G4245 G3588 G1722 G2419

Additional Cross-References

Acts 15:2 (References Jerusalem): When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

Acts 11:30 (Parallel theme): Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Acts 15:6 (Parallel theme): And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.

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