

Acts 21:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:

Analysis

The Jerusalem elders' report that 'many thousands' (Greek 'myriades,' literally 'myriads') of Jews believed demonstrated the gospel's powerful impact even in Judaism's heartland. However, these believers remained 'zealous of the law,' creating tension with Paul's law-free Gentile mission. This verse captures the transitional period as God's redemptive program moved from Israel-centered to church-centered.

Historical Context

This large number of Jewish believers in Jerusalem (possibly 20,000-50,000) shows Christianity's early growth within Judaism. Their continued law-observance was culturally appropriate for Jews, though not required for salvation (Acts 15).

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How do you balance respect for cultural-religious traditions with the freedom of the gospel?
2. What does this teach about allowing different expressions of faith within the one body of Christ?

Interlinear Text

τοῦ δὲ ἀκούσαντες ἐδόξαζον τοῦ Κυρίου· εἶπόν τε
which And when they heard it they glorified which the Lord said and
G3588 G1161 G191 G1392 G3588 G2962 G2036 G5037

αὐτῷ Θεωρεῖς ἀδελφέ πόσαι μυριάδες εἰσὶν
unto him Thou seest brother how many thousands there are
G846 G2334 G80 G4214 G3461 G1526

Ἰουδαίων τοῦ πεπιστευκότων καὶ πάντες ζηλωταὶ τοῦ
of Jews which believe and all zealous which
G2453 G3588 G4100 G2532 G3956 G2207 G3588

νόμου ὑπάρχουσιν·
of the law they are
G3551 G5225

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 1:14 (Parallel theme): And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

Acts 22:3 (Word): I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

Romans 10:2 (Parallel theme): For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

Acts 15:1 (Parallel theme): And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

Acts 11:18 (Glory): When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

Acts 15:5 (Faith): But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.