

# Acts 17:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.

## Analysis

**Certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him**—Paul engaged Athens' two dominant philosophical schools. The Epicureans (Ἐπικούρειοι) followed Epicurus (341-270 BC), denying divine providence and seeking pleasure as life's goal. The Stoicks (Στωϊκοί) emphasized fate, duty, and pantheistic divine reason permeating nature. Both rejected bodily resurrection as absurd.

**What will this babbler say?** (σπερμολόγος)—Literally "seed-picker," a contemptuous Athens street slang for scavengers who picked up scraps, thus an intellectual charlatan who gathers others' ideas without understanding. **A setter forth of strange gods** (ξένων δαιμονίων)—The same charge leveled against Socrates in 399 BC. Ironically, they misunderstood **Jesus, and the resurrection** (Ιησοῦν καὶ τὴν Ἀνάστασιν) as two foreign deities, mistaking anastasis (resurrection) for a goddess' name.

## Historical Context

Paul arrived in Athens around AD 50-51 during his second missionary journey. Athens, though past its political peak, remained the philosophical capital of the

Roman world. The Areopagus (Mars Hill) was both a location and the council that regulated religious teaching. Paul's proclamation of bodily resurrection directly contradicted both Epicurean materialism and Stoic cyclical cosmology.

## Related Passages

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**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

## Study Questions

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1. How does Paul's engagement with hostile intellectuals model speaking truth to cultural elites who mock the gospel?
2. Why is bodily resurrection (not just spiritual immortality) essential to Christian hope—and why does secular philosophy find it offensive?

## Interlinear Text

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certain Then G3588 of the Epicureans And G3588 of the Stoicks  
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Jesus And G3588 the resurrection him he preached  
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## Additional Cross-References

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**Acts 4:2** (Resurrection): Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

**Luke 11:53** (Resurrection): And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things:

**Colossians 2:8** (Parallel theme): Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

**Mark 9:14** (Parallel theme): And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them.

**1 Corinthians 4:10** (Parallel theme): We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised.

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