

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 Stoics (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** (Ἰησοῦν 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

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

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

τινες	δέ	τῶν	Ἐπικουρείων	καὶ	τῶν	Στωϊκῶν		
certain	Then	G3588	of the Epicureans	And	G3588	of the Stoicks		
G5100	G1161		G1946	G2532		G4770		
φιλοσόφων	συνέβαλλον	αὐτοῖς	καὶ	τινες	λέγειν	Τί	ἂν	
philosophers	encountered	him	And	certain	said	What	will	
G5386	G4820	G846	G2532	G5100	G3004	G5101	G302	
θέλοι	ὁ	σπερμολόγος	οὗτος	λέγειν	οἱ	δέ	Ξένων	
G2309	G3588	babblers	this	said	G3588	Then	of strange	
		G4691	G3778	G3004		G1161	G3581	
δαιμονίων	δοκεῖ	καταγγελεὺς	εἶναι	ὅτι	τὸν			
gods	some He seemeth	a setter forth	to be	because	G3588			
G1140	G1380	G2604	G1511	G3754				
Ἰησοῦν	καὶ	τὴν	ἀνάστασιν	αὐτοῖς	εὐηγγελίζετο			
Jesus	And	G3588	the resurrection	him	he preached			
G2424	G2532		G386	G846	G2097			

Additional Cross-References

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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