

Acts 17:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying,
May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest,
is?

Analysis

And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus (Ἄρειον Πάγον, Areion Pagon)—literally "Hill of Ares" (Mars Hill), the supreme court of Athens that handled religious and philosophical matters. This was not an arrest but an invitation, though Luke's language suggests formality.

May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? (καινή διδαχή, kainē didachē)—The Epicurean and Stoic philosophers (v.18) were genuinely curious about Paul's "strange things" (ξενίζοντα, xenizonta, v.20). The Athenians' love of novelty (v.21) opened the door for Paul's masterful apologetic to pagan philosophy. What began as intellectual curiosity would become Christianity's most famous engagement with Greek thought, where Paul quotes their own poets (v.28) to establish common ground before proclaiming the Resurrection.

Historical Context

The Areopagus council met on a rocky outcrop northwest of the Acropolis in Athens (circa AD 50-51). Named after Ares (Greek god of war, Roman Mars), it had jurisdiction over religious innovations. Athens was past its political prime but remained the intellectual center of the Roman world, filled with monuments to countless deities.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How did Paul use the Athenians' curiosity about "new doctrine" as an opportunity rather than viewing their skepticism as opposition?
2. When sharing the gospel with intellectuals or skeptics, how can you establish common ground (as Paul did with Greek poets) before presenting Christ's exclusive claims?

Interlinear Text

ἐπιλαβόμενοι	τε	αὐτοῦ	ἐπὶ	τὸν	Πάγον	Πάγον
they took	And	him	unto	G3588	Areopagus	Areopagus
G1949	G5037	G846	G1909		G697	G697
ἤγαγον	λέγοντες	Δυνάμεθα	γινῶναι	τίς	ἡ	καινὴ
and brought him	saying	May	we know	what	G3588	new
G71	G3004	G1410	G1097	G5101		G2537
αὕτη	ἡ	ὕπὸ	σοῦ	λαλουμένη	διδασχὴ	
this	G3588	whereof	thou	speakest	doctrine	
G3778		G5259	G4675	G2980	G1322	

Additional Cross-References

Mark 1:27 (Parallel theme): And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.

Acts 17:22 (Parallel theme): Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

