

# Acts 17:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.

## Analysis

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**Thou bringest certain strange things to our ears** (ξενίζοντά τινα εἰσφέρεις εἰς τὰς ἀκοὰς ἡμῶν)—The verb xenizonta means "foreign," "alien," or "surprising." The Epicurean and Stoic philosophers found Paul's proclamation of Jesus and the resurrection (anastasis, v.18) utterly novel—not merely unfamiliar, but intellectually jarring to Greek philosophical categories. Athens prided itself on intellectual sophistication, yet Paul's gospel defied their wisdom (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:23).

**We would know therefore what these things mean** (βουλόμεθα οὖν γινῶναι τίνα θέλει ταῦτα εἶναι)—The word boulometha expresses deliberate desire or intention. This wasn't casual curiosity but formal philosophical inquiry. The Areopagus court (v.19) evaluated new teachings for civic and religious propriety. Paul stood where Socrates was tried—a providential platform for gospel proclamation to the intellectual capital of the ancient world.

## Historical Context

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Athens in AD 50-51 remained culturally prestigious though politically diminished under Roman rule. The Areopagus (Mars Hill) functioned both as a location and a judicial council examining religious innovations. Luke notes Athenians "spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing" (v.21)—a characteristic observed by contemporary writers like Demosthenes and Thucydides.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

## Study Questions

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1. How does the gospel remain "strange" and countercultural to modern intellectual trends and philosophical assumptions?
2. What can we learn from Paul's willingness to engage hostile intellectual environments rather than retreat to safer audiences?

## Interlinear Text

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ξενίζοντα	γάρ	τινα	εἰσφέρεις	εἰς	τὰς	ἀκοὰς	ἡμῶν·
strange things	For	certain	thou bringest	to	G3588	ears	our
G3579	G1063	G5100	G1533	G1519		G189	G2257
βουλόμεθα	οὖν	γινῶναι	τί	ἂν	θέλοι	ταῦτα	εἶναι
we would	therefore	know	what	mean	G2309	these things	G1511
G1014	G3767	G1097	G5101	G302		G5023	

## Additional Cross-References

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**Hosea 8:12** (Parallel theme): I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing.

**1 Peter 4:4** (Parallel theme): Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:

**1 Corinthians 2:14** (Parallel theme): But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

**1 Corinthians 1:23** (Parallel theme): But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

