

# Acts 17:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

(For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)

## Analysis

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**For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else**—Luke provides this parenthetical cultural observation to explain the Athenian response. The Greek phrase εὐκαιροῦντες εἰς οὐδὲν ἕτερον (eukairountes eis ouden heteron) literally means 'had leisure for nothing else,' highlighting how the Athenians devoted their abundant free time exclusively to intellectual novelty.

**But either to tell, or to hear some new thing** (καινότερόν τι, kainoteron ti)—the comparative form 'newer' (rather than simply 'new') captures Athens' insatiable appetite for the latest philosophical speculation. This cultural obsession perfectly positioned Paul's message about the resurrection as both novel and compelling, yet also revealed the underlying spiritual emptiness: intellectual curiosity divorced from truth-seeking. Athens represents the danger of valuing innovation over wisdom, novelty over revelation—a perpetual quest for 'something new' that never satisfies because it rejects the ancient truth of God.

## Historical Context

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Athens in Paul's day (c. AD 50) had declined from its classical glory but remained the intellectual capital of the Roman world. As a free city with numerous philosophical schools (Stoic, Epicurean, Academic, Peripatetic), Athens attracted scholars and tourists. The Athenian addiction to novelty was noted by ancient

writers including Demosthenes and Thucydides, making Luke's observation historically accurate.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

## Study Questions

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1. How does modern culture's obsession with 'the latest thing' mirror first-century Athens' addiction to novelty?
2. What is the difference between genuine intellectual curiosity that seeks truth versus the Athenian pursuit of novelty for its own sake?

## Interlinear Text

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Ἀθηναῖοι δὲ πάντες καὶ οἱ ἐπιδημοῦντες ξένοι εἰς  
**the Athenians (For all and which were there strangers in**  
G117 G1161 G3956 G2532 G3588 G1927 G3581 G1519

οὐδὲν ἕτερον εὐκαίρουν, ἢ λέγειν τι καὶ  
**nothing else spent their time but either to tell some and**  
G3762 G2087 G2119 G2228 G3004 G5100 G2532

ἀκούειν καινότερον  
**to hear new thing**  
G191 G2537

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