

Acts 25:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

Analysis

But had certain questions against him of their own superstition—Festus dismisses Jewish theology as δεισιδαιμονίας (deisidaimonias, 'superstition, religion')—a neutral or slightly pejorative term Romans used for foreign religions. The phrase ζητήματα (zētēmata, 'questions, disputes') indicates scholarly debates, not crimes. To Festus, these theological arguments are incomprehensible and legally irrelevant.

And of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive—Here is the crux: περί τινος Ἰησοῦ τεθνηκότος, ὃν ἔφασκεν ὁ Παῦλος ζῆν (peri tinos Iēsou tethnēkotos, hon ephasken ho Paulos zēn, 'concerning a certain Jesus, having died, whom Paul was affirming to live'). Festus reduces the entire gospel to a dispute about a dead man's status. He misses the cosmic significance—that Jesus's resurrection validates His claims and offers salvation. Festus's incomprehension typifies natural man's inability to grasp spiritual truth (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Historical Context

Roman governors typically dismissed Jewish theological disputes as arcane and irrelevant to governance. They protected Jewish religious practice (it was a religio licita, legal religion) but didn't engage with its content. Festus's characterization of Christianity as a debate about a dead man reflects Roman pragmatism—resurrection claims were philosophically possible in Greco-Roman thought but

politically insignificant. This incomprehension actually helped Christianity: what Rome couldn't understand, it couldn't easily suppress. Paul's 'Jesus is alive' proclamation would eventually transform the empire Rome thought too sophisticated to believe it.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does Festus's reduction of the gospel to 'one Jesus...dead...Paul says alive' demonstrate the natural mind's inability to comprehend spiritual reality?
2. What does this passage teach about the centrality of resurrection to Christian faith—it's either glorious truth or utter foolishness?
3. In what ways do modern secular authorities similarly misunderstand or dismiss Christian truth claims as irrelevant private beliefs?

Interlinear Text

ζητήματα δέ τινος περί τῆς ιδίας δεισιδαιμονίας

questions But certain of G3588 their own superstition
G2213 G1161 G5100 G4012 G2398 G1175

εἶχον πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ περί τινος Ἰησοῦ τεθνηκότος

had against him and of certain Jesus which was dead
G2192 G4314 G846 G2532 G4012 G5100 G2424 G2348

ὅν ἔφασκεν ὁ Παῦλος ζῆν

whom affirmed G3588 Paul to be alive
G3739 G5335 G3972 G2198

Additional Cross-References

Acts 18:15 (Parallel theme): But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters.

Acts 23:29 (Parallel theme): Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds.

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