

Acts 17: 16-34 - Who said what?

Post by “Don” of October 30, 2024 at 9:47 PM

Since the Epicureans and Stoics are mentioned by name in the Christian New Testament, I'd like to offer a "game" of sorts. Of the quotes and actions of the two ancient schools, who said what? Epicureans or Stoics? Here are the lines, then the full section in context:

- Some said, “What does this pretentious babblers (σπερμολόγος) want to say?”
- Others said, “He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign divinities. (ξένων δαιμονίων)”
- (They) asked him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? 20 It sounds rather strange to us, so we would like to know what it means.”
- When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some scoffed
- others said, “We will hear you again about this.”
- But some of them joined him and became believers

Who said/did each one: Epicureans, Stoics, or other pagan Athenians in the crowd? Of course, there's absolutely no way to know for sure. Think of it as a thought experiment.

Quote from Acts 17: 16-34

16 While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols. 17 So he argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons and also in the marketplace[d] every day with those who happened to be there. 18 Also some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers debated with him. Some said, “What does this pretentious babblers want to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign divinities.” (This was because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.) 19 So they took him and brought him to the Areopagus and asked him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? 20 It sounds rather strange to us, so we would like to know what it means.” 21 Now all the Athenians and the foreigners living there would spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new.

22 Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, “Athenians, I see how extremely spiritual you are in every way. 23 For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. 24 The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, 25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all

things. 26 From one ancestor[e] he made all peoples to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, 27 so that they would search for God[f] and perhaps fumble about for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. 28 For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said,

‘For we, too, are his offspring.’

29 “Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. 30 While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, 31 because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

32 When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some scoffed, but others said, “We will hear you again about this.” 33 At that point Paul left them. 34 But some of them joined him and became believers, including Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

Post by “Don” of October 31, 2024 at 9:02 AM

Note, *Acts* is a literary invention. Paul went to Athens, but what he actually said is unknown. He had no secretary following him around. Is there a tradition of what he generally said? Probably. I'd it known how he was generally received? Probably. Traditionally , he made some converts, including Dionysius, Damaris, and some others.

So, my point is, we are more than allowed to imagine what the Stoics and Epicureans said, just as much a the author of *Acts* put words in the mouths of the Athenians and Paul.

Post by “Eikadistes” of October 31, 2024 at 11:01 AM

I've been [documenting my discoveries on biblical passages](#) that directly reference Epicureans, and I was tickled to find them having referred to Paul as a "**seed picker [like of out a gutter]**".

I should add, *that* one, I would bet, came from Epicureans, who used the analogy of "seeds" to refer to everything from the constituents of reality to the pieces of the soul to sex fluids.