

John 16:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

Analysis

He will reprove the world (ἐλέγξει τὸν κόσμον, elenxei ton kosmon)—the verb elenchō means to convict, expose, or prove guilty, as in a legal proceeding. The Spirit acts as divine prosecutor, bringing irrefutable evidence of the world's guilt. The threefold conviction concerns **sin, righteousness, and judgment** (περὶ ἀμαρτίας καὶ περὶ δικαιοσύνης καὶ περὶ κρίσεως, peri hamartias kai peri dikaiosynēs kai peri kriseōs).

This judicial language presents the Spirit's ministry as courtroom conviction. The kosmos (world-system in rebellion against God) stands accused, and the Paraclete presents evidence that exposes humanity's fundamental guilt. This conviction precedes conversion—the Spirit must first convict of sin before sinners will seek salvation. Without the Spirit's work, no evangelistic preaching, however eloquent, can produce genuine repentance.

Historical Context

Jesus spoke this promise hours before His arrest. Within 50 days, at Pentecost, the Spirit would descend and immediately convict 3,000 Jews of their guilt in crucifying Messiah (Acts 2:37: 'they were pricked in their heart'). The Spirit's convicting work began in Jerusalem and continues globally until Christ's return, operating through the preached Word to expose sin and point to Christ.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. When did you first experience the Holy Spirit's conviction of your sin, and how did it lead you to Christ?
2. How does the Spirit's convicting work differ from human guilt-manipulation or condemnation?
3. In what ways should the church cooperate with the Spirit's convicting ministry in evangelism?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἐλθὼν ἐκεῖνος ἐλέγξει τὸν κόσμον περὶ¹
And when he is come he will reprove G3588 the world of

G2532 G2064 G1565 G1651 G2889 G4012

ἀμαρτίας καὶ περὶ δικαιοσύνης καὶ περὶ κρίσεως·

sin And of righteousness And of judgment

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Additional Cross-References

Jude 1:15 (Judgment): To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

Acts 2:37 (Parallel theme): Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

Zechariah 12:10 (Parallel theme): And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

1 Corinthians 14:24 (Judgment): But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:

John 8:9 (Parallel theme): And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.