

John Lesson 18 Articles

Jesus now explained the work the Spirit will do in the world through the church. The very fact that the Spirit is in the world is an indictment against the world. Actually, Christ should be in the world, reigning as King; but the world crucified Christ. Keep in mind that the Spirit does not come to the people of the lost world (14:17) but to the people of God. His Spirit is here, reminding mankind of its awful sin. There is a threefold conviction of the world by the Spirit:

A. *Of sin (v. 9).*

And this is the sin of unbelief. The Spirit does not convict the world of individual sins; the conscience must do this (see Acts 24:24–25). The Spirit’s presence in the world is proof that the world does not believe on Christ; otherwise Christ would be here in the world. The sin that condemns the soul is unbelief, the rejection of Christ (see John 3:18–21).

B. *Of righteousness (v. 10).*

Note that this is not the same as unrighteousness, that is, the sins of lost souls. Christ is speaking of the Spirit’s conviction of the world, not of individual unbelievers, although there is a personal application. The Spirit’s presence in the world is proof of the righteousness of Christ, who is now returned to the Father. While on earth, Christ was accused of being a lawbreaker and a sinner, as well as a counterfeit. But the fact that the Spirit is present on earth is proof that the Father raised the Son and received Him back to heaven.

C. *Of judgment (v. 11).*

Do not confuse this with Acts 24:25, “judgment to come.” Christ is speaking here of the past judgment at the cross, not a future judgment. He had spoken of judging Satan and the world (12:31–32; see also Col. 2:15). The presence of the Spirit in the world is evidence that Satan has been judged and defeated; otherwise Satan would be controlling this world.

You may apply these three judgments to the individual unbeliever. The Spirit uses witnessing Christians and the Word to convince the unbeliever of his sin of unbelief; of his need for righteousness; of the fact that, since he belongs to Satan (Eph. 2:1–3), he is on the losing side. There is no salvation without Spirit-led conviction, for the Spirit uses the Word to convict lost souls.¹

16:8 The following verses spell out in detail the threefold role of the Paraclete in terms of the legal image of counselor and judge.²⁷⁶ Büchsel notes that in early Greek writings the verb *elenchein* meant “to scorn” and later “to shame,” but in the New Testament it “almost always means ‘to show someone his sin and to summon him to repentance.’”²⁷⁷

In these verses, however, I believe the meaning of the verb is even more focused so as to suggest something akin to a courtroom procedure. It is a fascinating picture in which one can imagine three elements of the procedure being presented. The first appears to be like a charge for which the defendant has been indicted. The second can be envisioned as the standard to which the defendant is required to conform, and the third can be viewed as the rationale the presiding judge uses to render the verdict. All of these elements can come within the basic meaning of this Greek verb, which is “bring to light, expose, set forth.”²⁷⁸

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). *Wiersbe’s expository outlines on the New Testament* (pp. 254–255). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

²⁷⁶ G. Behler has identified several aspects of the Spirit’s work, but the ideas need to be expanded as done here (“La double fonction de l’Esprit. *Advocat et guide*,” *Vie Spirituelle* 102 [1960]: 614–25).

²⁷⁷ See Büchsel, *TDNT*, 2.473–74.

²⁷⁸ See *BAGD*, 249. See also R. Brown, *John*, 2.705.

² Borchert, G. L. (2002). *John 12–21* (Vol. 25B, p. 165). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.