

ἐλέγχειν in LXX Isaiah: Its Implications as a Messianic-Eschatological Act of Purifying Zion and the Interpretive Possibilities for John 16:8–11

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Abstract

This study offers a nuanced perspective on the theological interpretation of John 16:8–11—the Paraclete passage—by examining the usage and theological significance of the verb ἐλέγχειν in Isaiah 2, 11, and 29. Previous scholarship on John 16:8–11 and lexical studies of ἐλέγχειν have largely approached this challenging passage through a juridical lens. Meanwhile, Isaiah 2, 11, and 29, rooted in Zion theology, employ ἐλέγχειν in prophecies concerning purification, the eschatological restoration of Zion, and the establishment of God’s kingdom. Moreover, Isaiah 11, as a messianic passage, anticipates the renewal of God’s reign through the coming of the Spirit. Yet even the comprehensive entry on ἐλέγχειν in the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament scarcely addresses its theological import within LXX Isaiah. This study seeks to highlight this often-overlooked dimension, arguing that the Old Testament context of this term significantly informs its New Testament interpretation. Situating John 16:8–11 within this broader canonical framework underscores the continuity between the Testaments—not as uniformity but as a dynamic interplay of themes—thereby enriching our understanding of the Paraclete’s role in the Fourth Gospel.

Keywords: LXX Isaiah, Zion, Messiah, purification, John 16, Paraclete

1. Introduction¹

Since the division of biblical studies into Old Testament and New Testament scholarship, the dominant trend in Old Testament research has generally been characterized by defining Christocentric interpretation as a dogmatic reading of the text, while pursuing and demonstrating the self-contained integrity of the Old Testament itself.² However, Christian theology must remain sensitive to the profound continuity that flows between the Old and New Testaments. Continuity does not imply uniformity. Just as the spectrum of light cannot be confined to the seven colors of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet, so too does diversity converge to form a unified whole.

The individual texts of the Old Testament possess a formative history that reflects their distinctive characteristics at the human level. Yet, at the same time, they participate in the grand continuity of the divine economy of redemption, wherein the divine purpose operates through frail humanity. Concerning this intrinsic transcendence of the Old Testament, 2 Timothy bears witness: “Every Scripture is God-breathed (πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος) and is able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (τὰ δυνάμενά σε σοφίσαι εἰς σωτηρίαν διὰ πίστεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ)” (2 Tim 3:15–16).

The early Christian community appears to have been closely aligned with the Septuagint (LXX) text, as evidenced by the frequent reflection of the LXX in Old Testament quotations within the New Testament. Beyond direct citations, numerous examples reveal that the underlying conceptual framework, vocabulary, syntax, and various expressions in the New Testament resonate

¹ My interest in the continuity between the Old and New Testament passages aligns with the area of expertise of my advisor, Professor Jin-Myung Kim. Through the generous guidance I received, I was able to move beyond the Old Testament text and advance toward a canonical perspective shaped by a hermeneutic of attentive listening. Moreover, for the past five years, the ongoing work of exploring the profound continuity flowing between the Septuagint and the New Testament texts has been made possible through the “Daily Reading of the Greek Old and New Testament” class under the guidance of Professor Moon-Geoung Kim. I am deeply grateful to both professors and to my fellow classmates who continue to study alongside me.

² Zenger’s attempt to designate the Old Testament as the ‘First Testament’ can be understood as a response to the self-contained nature of these Old Testament texts. As a Catholic scholar, he seeks to keep open the possibility of dialogue regarding Judaism and the interpretation of the Old Testament. Erich Zenger, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 5. Aufl., Kohlhammer Studienbücher Theologie Bd. 1,1 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2004), 11-33.

with the Septuagint. Consequently, a thorough consideration of the LXX context becomes indispensable for understanding the New Testament. This necessity arises from the fact that the authors of the New Testament, whether consciously or unconsciously, bore witness within a shared matrix of Old Testament contexts.

This study aims to investigate the theological depth of the verb *ἐλέγχειν* in John 16:8 by situating it within the broader continuity between the Old and New Testaments and examining its usage in the Septuagint, particularly in Isaiah 2, 11, and 29. The analysis begins with an exploration of the significant theological contexts in which *ἐλέγχειν* occurs in Isaiah 2:2–5, 11:1–5, and 29:19–21. Building on these insights, the discussion proceeds to consider its interpretive function in John 3:20–21 and 8:45–48, culminating in a focused study of John 16:8–11. Through this trajectory, the paper seeks to demonstrate how the Old Testament background of this term enriches its New Testament application, offering a more nuanced understanding of its role within the Paraclete discourse.

2. The Three Occurrences of *ἐλέγχειν* in LXX Isaiah

2.1. The Usage of *ἐλέγχειν* in the Context of Isaiah 2:2–5

Isaiah 2:2–5 is a pivotal passage that resonates with the overarching theme of the book. This section reveals God's ultimate purpose for Zion, aligning His purifying judgment with the central message of Isaiah. By articulating the divine intent for Zion and the cleansing judgment directed toward it, these verses encapsulate the theological core of the book's message.³

³ According to Watts, this view of Zion's future without nationalistic goals actually belongs to Isaiah of eighth-century Jerusalem. J. D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, Word Biblical Commentary vol. 24 (Waco: Word Books, 1985), 28; Regarding this, Hae Kwon Kim argues that chapter 2 deals with the dialectical evolution of the Davidic kingdom. According to his analysis, Judah and Zion will become the center for realizing the ideals of spiritual imperialism, and the glory of the old Davidic kingdom will be sublimated into the ideal of a spiritual Davidic kingdom. However, such spiritual elevation of Zion presupposes the purification of Zion itself in its historical reality. Hae Kwon Kim, *A commentary on Isaiah(1)* (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society of Korea, 2006), 115.

2.2	Ὅτι ἔσται ἐν ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις ἐμφανὲς τὸ ὄρος κυρίου καὶ ὁ οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπ' ἁκρῶν τῶν ὀρέων καὶ ὑψωθήσεται ὑπεράνω τῶν βουνῶν
2.3a	καὶ ἔξουσιν ἐπ' αὐτὸ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη καὶ πορευσονται ἔθνη πολλὰ καὶ ἐροῦσιν

In verse 2, the phrase *ἔσται* + *ἐμφανὲς* corresponds to *ὑψωθήσεται*, articulating that Zion—referred to by alternative designations such as *τὸ ὄρος κυρίου* (“the mountain of the Lord”) and *ὁ οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ* (“the house of God”)—as well as *ἐπ' ἁκρῶν τῶν ὀρέων* (“on the heights of the mountains”) and *ὑπεράνω τῶν βουνῶν* (“above the hills”), will be revealed and exalted. This assertion is presented in a parallel structure, with overlapping syntactic forms. The manifestation of Zion is expressed through *ἐμφανὲς*, evoking the notion of a theophany, while its exaltation is rendered in the future tense as a divine passive (*ὑψωθήσεται*). To this place, all nations and many peoples will come and declare the following. The content of their declaration is presented in direct discourse in verse 3b.

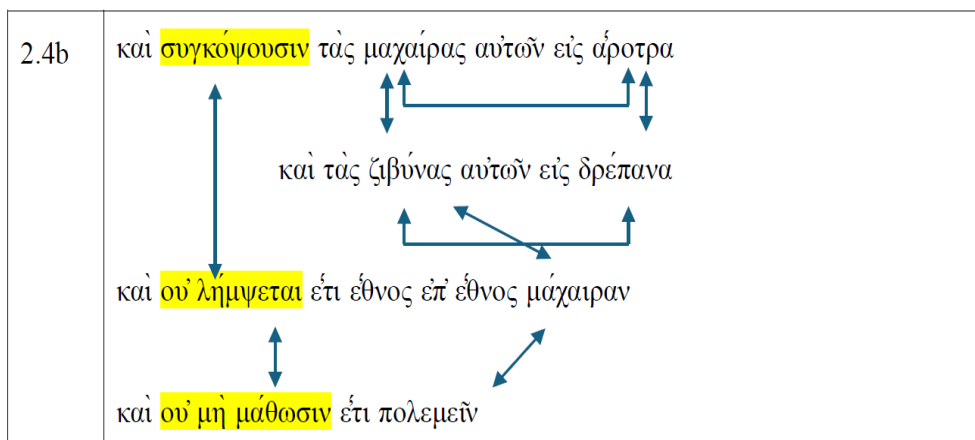
2.3b	Δευτε καὶ ἀναβῶμεν εἰς τὸ ὄρος κυρίου καὶ εἰς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ θεοῦ Ἰακώβ καὶ ἀναγγελεῖ ἡμῖν τὴν ὁδὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ πορευσόμεθα ἐν αὐτῇ ἐκ γὰρ Σιὼν ἐξελεύσεται νόμος καὶ λόγος κυρίου ἐξ Ἱερουσαλὴμ
2.4a	καὶ κρινεῖ ἀνά μέσον τῶν ἐθνῶν καὶ ἐλέγξει λαὸν πολύν

The nations collectively resolve to ascend to Zion. Their motivation for this ascent lies in the expectation that, upon their arrival, the Lord will instruct them in His ways, enabling them to walk in His paths. In verse 3b, synonymous designations for Zion—*τὸ ὄρος κυρίου* (“the mountain of the Lord”), *τὸν οἶκον τοῦ θεοῦ Ἰακώβ* (“the house of the God of Jacob”), and *Σιών* (“Zion”)—are reiterated, thereby establishing a parallel structure that underscores the theological centrality of Zion within the passage.

While the agent emerging from Zion could be expected to be the Lord Himself, the text distinctively expresses that the law and the word of the Lord will proceed from Zion and Jerusalem. *Σιών* and *Ἱερουσαλήμ*, as well as *νόμος* (“law”) and *λόγος κυρίου* (“word of the Lord”), are paired through internal parallelism, allowing Zion and Jerusalem, and likewise the law and the word of the Lord, to be interpreted as synonymous expressions. This Hebraic style of expression reveals that Jerusalem is, in essence, Zion, and that the law is, in fact, the word of the Lord.

Following verse 3b, verse 4a presents the verbs *κρινεῖ* (“he will judge”) and *ἐλέγξει* (“he will reprove”) in the third person singular, arranged in parallel. Given that *λόγος κυρίου* (“the word of the Lord”) immediately precedes these verbs, it is plausible to regard the Lord as their subject. Alternatively, the emphasis on the repetition and correspondence between *νόμος* (“law”) and *λόγος κυρίου* suggests that “the word” itself may function as the subject. The verb *ἐξελεύσεται* (“will go forth”), also in the third person singular, has already appeared in verse 3b, and is followed by the coordinated sequence *καὶ κρινεῖ καὶ ἐλέγξει* (“and he will judge and he will reprove”). In prophetic literature, the word of the Lord that comes to the prophets is not only revelatory speech but also embodies the very presence of the Lord. Thus, the personified depiction of the law and the word of the Lord proceeding from Zion and Jerusalem implies that the Lord exercises judgment (*κρίνειν*) and reproof (*ἐλέγχειν*) through His word. These two verbs are juxtaposed in parallel, indicating that the usage of *ἐλέγχειν* here aligns with the context of judgment, adjudication, and legal decision.

However, the context of Isaiah 2 cannot be understood solely in juridical terms. The verb *ἐλέγχειν* appears within a prophetic vision that foretells the eschatological restoration of Zion and the renewal of the dominion of God's word. In this context, the Lord's judicial and corrective activity—His rulership and legal actions as expressed through the *λόγος κυρίου* ("word of the Lord")—are ultimately prophesied to be exercised over all nations who gather in Zion.



In verse 4b, the transformation that will occur among the nations subject to the judgment and reproof of the *λόγος κυρίου* ("word of the Lord") is expressed through a parallel progression of the verbs *συγκόψουσιν*, *οὐ λήμψεται*, and *οὐ μὴ μάθωσιν*. Specifically, they will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will no longer take up sword against nation, nor will they learn war anymore.

In verses 2–4, an eschatological vision for Zion is presented: the nations will stream toward it, and through the judgment (*κρίνειν*) and reproof (*ἐλέγχειν*) enacted by the law—that is, the word of the Lord (or, alternatively, by the third-person singular subject He)—the nations will cease from warfare and dwell peacefully under the dominion of the law and the word of the Lord. However, verse 5 reveals that this prophecy of the restoration of the nations and Zion is set within a context that calls for transformation within the house of Jacob.

The phrase *τῷ φωτὶ κυρίου* (“the light of the Lord”) in verse 5 corresponds to *τὴν ὁδὸν αὐτοῦ* (“His way”) in verse 3 and is also connected to the *νόμος* (“law”) and *λόγος κυρίου* (“word of the Lord”) in verse 4. In the book of Isaiah, Torah and light are closely related concepts (9:1; 10:17; 30:26; 42:6; 49:6; 51:4; 58:8,10; 59:9; 60:1,3,19).⁴

2.2. The Usage of *ἐλέγχειν* in the Context of LXX Isaiah 11:1–5

11.1	Καὶ ἐξελεύσεται ῥάβδος ἐκ τῆς ῥίζης Ἰεσσαί, καὶ ἄνθος ἐκ τῆς ῥίζης ἀναβήσεται.
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In LXX Isaiah 11:1, *ἐξελεύσεται* and *ἀναβήσεται* correspond in a parallel structure, while *ῥάβδος ἐκ τῆς ῥίζης Ἰεσσαί* and *ἄνθος ἐκ τῆς ῥίζης* form a chiasmic pair. According to Lowth’s classification, this can be regarded as synonymous parallelism. When schematized following Berlin’s typology, it exhibits an **abb’a’** structure:

- a. *ἐξελεύσεται*: “shall come forth”
- b. *ῥάβδος ἐκ τῆς ῥίζης Ἰεσσαί*: “a rod from the root of Jesse”
- b’. *ἄνθος ἐκ τῆς ῥίζης*: “a blossom from the root”
- a’. *ἀναβήσεται*: “shall spring up”

⁴ Willem A. M. Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12* Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament (Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 2003), 89.

11.2	καὶ ἀναπαύσεται ἐπ’ αὐτὸν πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ, πνεῦμα σοφίας καὶ συνέσεως, πνεῦμα βουλῆς καὶ ἰσχύος, πνεῦμα γνώσεως καὶ εὐσεβείας· ἐμπλήσει αὐτὸν πνεῦμα φόβου θεοῦ.
11.3a	

In Isaiah 11:2–3a, ἀναπαύσεται ἐπ’ αὐτὸν πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ and ἐμπλήσει αὐτὸν πνεῦμα φόβου θεοῦ correspond externally in parallel, while, uniquely, between them, πνεῦμα σοφίας καὶ συνέσεως, πνεῦμα βουλῆς καὶ ἰσχύος, and πνεῦμα γνώσεως καὶ εὐσεβείας parallel πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ and πνεῦμα φόβου θεοῦ. This too may be regarded as synonymous parallelism. When schematized, it forms a distinctive parallel structure of (ab)b’b’’b’’’(a’b’’’’), and according to Kugel’s analysis of parallelism, such repetition achieves emphasis and semantic expansion.⁵ The “Spirit” even forms an accumulating semantic cluster through fivefold repetition.

⁵ James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 1–360.

	LXX	Translation
a + b	ἀναπαύσεται ἐπ' αὐτὸν + πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ	shall rest upon him + Spirit of God
b'	πνεῦμα σοφίας καὶ συνέσεως	Spirit of wisdom and understanding
b''	πνεῦμα βουλήs καὶ ἰσχύος	Spirit of counsel and might
b'''	πνεῦμα γνώσεως καὶ εὐσεβείας	Spirit of knowledge and piety
a' + b'''	ἐμπλήσει αὐτὸν + πνεῦμα φόβου θεοῦ	shall fill him + Spirit of the fear of God

11.3b	οὐ κατὰ τὴν δόξαν κρινεῖ ↙ ↘ οὐδὲ κατὰ τὴν λαλίαν ἐλέγξει
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In Isaiah 11:3b, the verbs *κρίνειν* and *ἐλέγχειν* correspond in parallel, linked by the accusative construction with *κατὰ* indicating the standard: *κατὰ τὴν δόξαν* and *κατὰ τὴν λαλίαν*. The term *δόξα* primarily denotes honor, glory, or reputation, but etymologically it refers to what one considers or thinks—people's evaluation—which may differ from reality. The ministry of the one who comes forth from the root of Jesse does not judge or rebuke according to visible reputation or spoken words. What *κρίνειν* and *ἐλέγχειν* reveal should not be understood merely within a judicial context. According to Hae Kwon Kim, Isaiah 11, together with chapter 9, constitutes an early messianic oracle in Isaiah, presenting future salvation as the realization of the return of Assyrian (Babylonian) exiles to their homeland, the reunification of the northern and southern tribes, and the political dominion of a united Israel over surrounding nations—led by an ideal Davidic king.⁶

Within its historical context, the verbs *נִשְׁפָּט* and *נִבְרָא* are employed in parallel

⁶ Hae Kwon Kim, *A commentary on Isaiah(I)* (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society of Korea, 2006), 299.

progression to denote judicial judgment and corrective rebuke as royal acts of governance. The Septuagint translator renders these with the parallel verbs *κρίνειν* and *ἐλέγχειν*, preserving the sense of correspondence. These two terms reveal royal authority that transcends mere judicial activity of discerning right and wrong and administering correction; they signify the exercise of kingly rule. In the following verse, these verbs appear again in repeated usage, becoming key indicators of the royal Messiah's actions throughout Isaiah 11.

11.4a	ἀλλὰ κρίνει ταπεινῶ κρίσιν
	καὶ ἐλέγξει τοὺς ταπεινοὺς τῆς γῆς
11.4b	καὶ πατάξει γῆν τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ
	καὶ ἐν πνεύματι διὰ χειλέων ἀνελεῖ ἀσεβῆ

In verse 4, four verbs are juxtaposed in parallel: the first two are *κρίνειν* and *ἐλέγχειν*, already paired in verse 3b, while the latter two are *πατάσσειν* and *ἀναιρεῖν*. All four verbs, as in verse 3b, signify acts of governance that transcend mere judicial activity. The prophetic statement that the royal Messiah will strike the earth with the word of his mouth and slay the wicked with the breath through his lips reveals an authority that surpasses judicial and administrative functions. It manifests the divine rule of God—Creator and Judge—who governs through word and Spirit, mediated by the royal Messiah emerging from the root of Jesse.

In verse 4a, the objects of the governing actions expressed by the first two verbs are *ταπεινός*, denoting the lowly or humble. It appears once in the dative masculine singular and once in the accusative masculine plural, forming a parallel while contrasting with the objects of the latter two verbs—*the earth* and *the ungodly*—thus creating an antithetical parallelism. In verse 4b, *τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ* and *ἐν πνεύματι διὰ χειλέων* reveal the source of these governing acts through the instrumental dative and the usage of *ἐν* with the dative. The prophetic vision declares that through the word of the royal

Messiah’s mouth and the breath of his lips—that is, through the Word and Spirit proceeding from God—the reign of God’s kingdom will be actualized. The parallel elements of verse 4

can be summarized as follows:

	Verbs (governing acts)	Those governed by the Messiah	Instruments (basis of governing acts)
4a	<i>κρινεῖ</i>	<i>ταπεινῶ</i>	—
4a	<i>ἐλέγξει</i>	<i>τοὺς ταπεινοὺς τῆς γῆς</i>	—
4b	<i>πατάξει</i>	<i>γῆν</i>	<i>τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ</i>
4b	<i>ἀνελεῖ</i>	<i>ἀσεβῆ</i>	<i>ἐν πνεύματι διὰ χειλέων</i>

In verse 4a, the two objects—“the poor” and “the poor of the earth”—refer to those who, through the judicial activity of the messianic governing acts of judging and correcting what is wrong, will receive salvation and restoration. In contrast, “the earth” and “the ungodly” become the targets of punishment and judgment, struck and removed as part of the ideal king’s governing acts.

11.5	καὶ ἔσται δικαιοσύνη ἐξωσμένος τὴν ὀσφὺν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀληθεία εἰλημένος τὰς πλευράς
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In verse 5, the characteristics of the royal Messiah, who comes forth from the root of Jesse, are expressed through the metaphor of clothing. Uniquely, nominative participles combined with the verb *εἰμί* form internal parallelism, guiding the symmetry between instrumental datives and objects. The structure unfolds in an **abca’b’c’** progression as follows:

Parallel of Datives	Parallel of Participles	Parallel of Synonyms
<i>δικαιοσύνη</i>	<i>ἐζωσμένος</i>	<i>τὴν ὁσφὺν αὐτοῦ</i>
<i>ἀληθεία</i>	<i>εἰλημένος</i>	<i>τὰς πλευράς</i>
Expression of the Basis and Character of Royal Governance	Messiah's Character Expressed through Clothing Metaphor	Messiah's Bodily Imagery in Contrast to Evil Rulers

The metaphor of the royal Messiah's body and garments—girding the waist and sides with righteousness and truth—signifies that all actions are grounded in the Word. This act of girding and clothing stands in stark contrast to the greedy rule of wicked rulers who seek to satisfy their own appetites. Moreover, the waist and sides may serve as a corporeal metaphor, symbolizing descendants who originate from him.⁷

⁷ The passage in the Septuagint Genesis, where Eve is created from Adam's *πλευρά* (LXX Gen 2:21–22), and the testimony in the New Testament Gospels that the crucified Messiah (Christ) poured out water and blood from his *πλευρά*, thereby accomplishing the redemptive love that gives life to sinners (John 19:34), are likewise noteworthy as distinctive corporeal metaphors.

2.3. The Usage of ἐλέγχειν in the Context of LXX Isaiah 29:19–21

29.19	καὶ ἀγαλλιάσονται πτωχοὶ διὰ κύριον ἐν εὐφροσύνῃ καὶ οἱ ἀπηλπισμένοι τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐμπλησθήσονται εὐφροσύνης
29.20	ἐξέλιπεν ἄνομος καὶ ἀπόλετο ὑπερήφανος καὶ ἐξώλεθρεύθησαν οἱ ἀνομοῦντες ἐπὶ κακίᾳ
29.21	καὶ οἱ ποιοῦντες ἁμαρτεῖν ἀνθρώπους ἐν λόγῳ πάντας δὲ τοὺς ἐλέγχοντας ἐν πύλαις πρόσκομμα θήσουσιν καὶ ἐπλαγίασαν ἐν ἀδίκοις δίκαιον

LXX Isaiah 29:19 and 20–21 exhibit a parallel progression, each prophesying salvation and judgment respectively. In verse 19, the terms *πτωχοὶ* and *οἱ ἀπηλπισμένοι τῶν ἀνθρώπων* correspond in a parallel structure, further clarifying that the poor are those who are in a state of despair.

In verse 20, the terms *ἄνομος*, *ὑπερήφανος*, and *οἱ ἀνομοῦντες* correspond in a parallel structure, enumerating those who are subject to judgment. In contrast, the groups in verse 19—those who obtain salvation and restoration through the Lord, namely the poor and those among humankind who have lost hope—along with the people in verse 21, those who render judgment at the city gate, and the righteous, are interconnected as belonging to the same category.

In the context of verse 21, the verb *ἐλέγχειν* appears in a nominalized participial form, referring to those who render judgment at the city gate. In parallel structure, *πάντας τοὺς ἐλέγχοντας ἐν πύλαις*, *ἄνθρωπους*, and *δίκαιον* correspond to one another, depicting a reality in which those who sin by words

against people, those who lay stumbling blocks before those who judge at the city gate, and those who mislead the righteous into injustice perpetrate wrongdoing. Salvation is granted as these objects of judgment are removed.

Therefore, the usage of *ἐλέγχειν* in LXX Isaiah 29, unlike in the preceding chapters 2 and 11, refers to a judicial activity on a human level that is helplessly trampled by the wicked. It is portrayed as something that will be restored only through God's purification, judgment and salvation.

2.4. The Theological Implications of the Verb *ἐλέγχειν* in the Context of LXX Isaiah

1. Present Reality Corrupt Zion Imminent wrath and judgment The Davidic kingdom in its historical form	2. <i>ἐλέγχειν</i> as a Governing Act The purifying rule of God and the Messiah Directed toward Zion and the nations	3. Repentance as a reaction to divine <i>ἐλέγχειν</i> Turning away from misguided paths Desire to walk in the light Response to God and His Messiah	4. Eschatological Vision A purified Zion Nations instructed and governed Ideal peace A spiritual Davidic kingdom
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In the context of the Septuagint version of Isaiah, the verb *ἐλέγχειν* appears closely associated with the purification of Zion. It is evident, however, that its purpose is not merely judicial judgment or punitive action. Although the process may involve pain and suffering as a form of discipline, the ultimate aim is transformative: through this purification, Zion becomes the pure dwelling place of God and serves as a spiritual center that draws the nations toward the light, the law, and the word of the Lord. Zion thus emerges as the locus of divine governance and as a symbol of the spiritual Davidic empire, leading the

nations toward instruction and salvation.⁸ Within the broader context of Isaiah 2, 11, and 29, the verb *ἐλέγχειν* can therefore be defined as a messianic and eschatological act of royal governance, undertaken for the purpose of purification through repentance and conversion.

3. The Semantic and Theological Context of *ἐλέγχειν* in the Fourth Gospel

3.1. John 3:20–21 and *ἐλέγχειν*

3.20a	πᾶς γὰρ ὁ φαῦλα πράσσων μισεῖ τὸ φῶς καὶ οὐκ ἔρχεται πρὸς τὸ φῶς
3.20b	ἵνα μὴ ἐλεγχθῇ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ
3.21a	ὁ δὲ ποιῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἔρχεται πρὸς τὸ φῶς
3.21b	ἵνα φανερωθῇ αὐτοῦ τὰ ἔργα ὅτι ἐν θεῷ ἐστὶν εἰργασμένα

In John 3:20b, *ἐλέγχειν* is mentioned as an act of *τὸ φῶς*. This light becomes an object of hatred, for everyone who practices evil deeds hates the light. Such hatred of the light is manifested in the refusal to come toward it, because those who do evil do not want their works to be exposed.

As observed earlier in LXX Isaiah 2:2–5, the final verse (v. 5) mentions the light of the Lord. This light forms a synonymous semantic cluster with His way, law, and the word of the Lord in verse 3. In this context, the exhortation in LXX Isaiah 2:5—“let us walk in the light of the Lord”—corresponds, when viewed through John 3:20, to the call to love the light and come toward it so that our deeds may be *ἐλέγχειν* by *τὸ φῶς*. Thus, both passages share the same

⁸ The expression ‘spiritual Davidic empire’ should be referenced from Hae Kwon Kim’s book. Hae Kwon Kim, *A commentary on Isaiah(I)*, 1-727.

theological thrust.

John 3:21a states that the one who practices the truth comes to the light. Verse 21b further testifies that such a person comes to the light so that it may be revealed that the deeds performed have been carried out in God. Thus, between verses 20 and 21, a contrasting parallelism is established as follows:

3:20	3:21
<i>πᾶς ὁ φανῶν πράσων</i>	<i>ὁ δὲ ποιῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν</i>
<i>μισεῖ τὸ φῶς</i>	
<i>οὐκ ἔρχεται πρὸς τὸ φῶς</i>	<i>ἔρχεται πρὸς τὸ φῶς</i>
<i>ἵνα μὴ ἐλεγχθῇ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ</i>	<i>ἵνα φανερωθῇ αὐτοῦ τὰ ἔργα ὅτι ἐν θεῷ ἐστὶν εἰργασμένα</i>

The contrasting parallelism between *ἵνα μὴ ἐλεγχθῇ* in verse 20 and *ἵνα φανερωθῇ* in verse 21 defines the work of the light. In verse 20, *ἐλεγχθῇ* is expressed as a divine passive from the human perspective—being reproved by the light’s activity. The one who hates the light and refuses to come to it rejects this reproof and resists its effect. In verse 21, *φανερωθῇ*, likewise as a divine passive, signifies being illuminated and revealed by the light’s activity. Together with *ἐλέγχειν* in verse 20, *φανεροῦν* in verse 21 delineates the dual function of the light: to expose and to manifest.

3.2. ἐλέγχειν in John 8:45–48

8.45	ἐγὼ δὲ ὅτι τὴν ἀλήθειαν λέγω, οὐ πιστεύετε μοι.
8.46	τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν ἐλέγχει με περὶ ἁμαρτίας; εἰ ἀλήθειαν λέγω, διὰ τί ὑμεῖς οὐ πιστεύετε μοι;
8.47	ὁ ὢν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τὰ ρήματα τοῦ θεοῦ ἀκούει· διὰ τοῦτο ὑμεῖς οὐκ ἀκούετε, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἐστέ.
8.48	Ἀπεκρίθησαν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ εἶπαν αὐτῷ· οὐ καλῶς λέγομεν ἡμεῖς ὅτι Σαμαρίτης εἶ σὺ καὶ δαιμόνιον ἔχεις;

In John 8:46, it becomes evident that the Jews are carrying out *ἐλέγχειν* toward Jesus with an anti-messianic attitude. Verse 48 provides a concrete example: the Jews mock Jesus as a Samaritan and even conclude that he is demon-possessed, while claiming that they are speaking rightly as they ought. Such value judgments—judicial acts concerning right and wrong—can be defined as *ἐλέγχειν περὶ ἁμαρτίας*. However, the Jews fall into contradiction by unjustly exercising *ἐλέγχειν* against Jesus with an anti-messianic stance.

Toward the Jews who have fallen into the contradiction of attempting to *ἐλέγχειν* Jesus, Jesus speaks the truth and carries out *ἐλέγχειν περὶ ἁμαρτίας* as a genuine judicial act, as revealed in the text.⁹ The basis for Jesus' exercise of *ἐλέγχειν* lies in this principle: those who belong to God hear the words of God. By speaking the truth—the very words of God—and by their refusal to believe

⁹ According to Brown, John 16:9 refers to the Paraclete's forensic activity. "John is thinking Something like a trial conducted before God where the guilt of the world will be publicly demonstrated to the disciples." Then the world which condemns Jesus here will itself come under judgement. Raymond E. Brown, *Gospel according to John XIII-XXI*. The Anchor Bible vol. 29A (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970), 711-2.

and listen to the truth, namely Jesus Himself, the Jews opposing Him demonstrate judicially that they do not belong to God. This can be schematized as follows:

	Category of Righteousness	Category of Unrighteousness
8.45	<i>τὴν ἀλήθειαν λέγω</i> I speak the truth	<i>οὐ πιστεύετε μοι</i> you do not believe me
8.46	<i>ἀλήθειαν λέγω</i> I speak the truth	<i>οὐ πιστεύετε μοι</i> you do not believe me
8.47a	<i>τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ θεοῦ ἀκούει</i> hears the words of God	<i>οὐκ ἀκούετε (τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ θεοῦ)</i> you do not hear (the words of God)
8.47b	<i>ὁ ὢν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ</i> the one who is of God	<i>ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἐστέ</i> you are not of God

3.3. ἐλέγχειν in John 16:8–11

16.8	Καὶ ἐλθὼν ἐκεῖνος ἐλέγξει τὸν κόσμον περὶ ἁμαρτίας καὶ περὶ δικαιοσύνης καὶ περὶ κρίσεως
16.9	περὶ ἁμαρτίας μέν, ὅτι οὐ πιστεύουσιν εἰς ἐμέ
16.10	περὶ δικαιοσύνης δέ, ὅτι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα ὑπάγω καὶ οὐκέτι θεωρεῖτέ με
16.11	περὶ δὲ κρίσεως ὅτι ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου κέκριται

In John 16:8–11, it is testified that when He comes, He will ἐλέγχειν the world concerning three matters. The One who is to come is the Spirit, referred to as ὁ παράκλητος. According to Ferdinand Hahn, παράκλητος—a verbal adjective derived from the verb παρακαλεῖν, which carries meanings such as “to call,” “to affirm,” “to comfort,” and “to exhort”—resonates with its verbal origin but decisively signifies “advocate,” that is, “one called to stand beside,

a helper.”¹⁰ Hahn explains that the concept of the Paraclete has been identified with the traditional designation “Holy Spirit” and with the Johannine term “Spirit of truth.”¹¹

Brown observes that commentators have not found the detailed explanation of John 16:8–11 easy. Augustine avoided the passage as very difficult, while Thomas Aquinas cited the views of others without presenting his own.¹² Regarding this challenging text, Udo Schnelle hypothesizes that among the collected sayings of the Paraclete available to the Evangelist of the Fourth Gospel, this section was included.¹³

The interpretation of this difficult passage in John 16:8–11 may vary depending on how the verb *ἐλέγχειν* is understood as describing the Paraclete’s ministry.¹⁴ Considering the context of the LXX Isaiah examined earlier, along with the usage of *ἐλέγχειν* within the Gospel of John, three major interpretive frameworks can be identified.

First, *ἐλέγχειν* as part of the Paraclete’s ministry should be understood as arising from God’s love toward its recipients. In Isaiah 2 of the LXX, the usage

¹⁰ Ferdinand Hahn, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments. Band II: Die Einheit des Neuen Testaments: Thematische Darstellung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 272.

¹¹ Hahn, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments II*, 272–273.

¹² Brown’s formulation is puzzling, given his awareness that Augustine authored, *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus*. The wording appears intended to suggest that Augustine approached the interpretation of this difficult passage with notable caution. Brown, *Gospel according to John XIII-XXI*, 711.

¹³ Udo Schnelle argues that the Evangelist of the Fourth Gospel had before him a collection of the “I am” sayings and a collection of the Paraclete sayings. The collection of “I am” sayings comprises seven symbolic motifs: the bread of life (John 6:35a), the light of the world (John 8:12), the door (John 10:7), the good shepherd (John 10:11), the resurrection and the life (John 11:25), the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6), and the true vine (John 15:1). The collection of Paraclete sayings likely included John 14:16–17, 26; 15:26; 16:7–11, and 13–15. Udo Schnelle, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 9. Auflage (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 576–7.

¹⁴ Brown, while acknowledging the significance of the verb *ἐλέγχειν*, focuses his discussion not on the theological implications of the verb itself but on its object—namely, the “world”—and on the question of whom this term actually designates. However, Brown makes little attempt to draw on the verb *ἐλέγχειν* from its Old Testament context; rather, in his commentary on John 16:11, he briefly notes, in connection with the Book of Revelation, that the eschatological features of Revelation chapters 12 and 20 and the exaltation of the Messiah are partially realized. Brown, *Gospel according to John XIII-XXI*, 711–4.

of *ἐλέγχειν* occurs within an eschatological and judicial act of governance, where spiritually purified Zion becomes the center to which the nations gather, longing for His instruction and seeking to learn His ways. According to His teaching and word, the nations will live under peaceful rule. Within the context of LXX Isaiah 2, the verb *ἐλέγχειν* is not depicted merely as a judicial activity that exposes guilt and renders judgment.

In various Old Testament contexts, the verb *ἐλέγχειν* refers to corrective discipline and admonition aimed at rectifying wrongdoing, often within a parental framework. It is mentioned that God may impose disciplinary correction upon the Davidic dynasty in the manner of a father toward a son (LXX 2 Sam 7:14). Instances appear where the subject of such corrective discipline includes family members, relatives, neighbors, teachers, and God Himself (LXX Gen 31:42; Lev 19:17; 1 Chr 12:18; 16:21; Ps 6:2; 37:2; 49:8; 49:21; 93:10; 104:14; Prov 9:8). In these cases, the root of *παιδεύειν*, meaning “to nurture” or “to discipline,” frequently occurs as a parallel expression to *ἐλέγχειν* (LXX Ps 140:5; Prov 3:11; 9:7; 15:12).

Such discipline and admonition serve to guide the heart toward perceiving and sensing wisdom. In this context, the verb *νοεῖν*, which relates to discerning and choosing in accordance with God’s word, will, and wisdom, appears alongside *ἐλέγχειν*. Similarly, *νουθέτημα*, denoting reproof and admonition that establish perception through warning and correction, functions as a parallel expression to *ἐλέγχειν* (LXX Prov 19:25; Job 5:17).

Second, *ἐλέγχειν* can be understood as the redemptive work of the Paraclete, calling the world—namely sinners—to repentance and a decisive turning. From its Old Testament background, *ἐλέγχειν* extends beyond a merely judicial context to encompass purification that corrects what is wrong. The contexts of LXX Isaiah 2, 11, and 29, examined earlier, envision an eschatological divine rule over Zion or Ariel—God’s people—who stand under judgment and await purification. Likewise, in the Gospel of John, *ἐλέγχειν* is not simply about rebuke, condemnation, or exposure of guilt; rather, as *TDNT* also explains, it signifies an act that redirects from sin toward repentance.¹⁵

As the Paraclete’s ministry that guides and leads toward purification through repentance, *ἐλέγχειν* represents a redemptive work that rescues the

¹⁵ Büschel, “ἐλέγχω,” *TDNT* 2, 473–6.

sinful world—yet what precedes this ministry is the world’s repentance. In various contexts of the LXX, those who accept *ἐλέγχειν* and thereby turn to the right path are counted among the wise, whereas those who reject and refuse it ultimately belong to the wicked and the foolish. Thus, human response to *ἐλέγχειν* divides into two paths: either a rebellious choice that evades and disregards the discipline of instruction, or a blessed choice of repentance—accepting correction even when it feels as piercing as a verdict of guilt.

Third, the Paraclete’s work of *ἐλέγχειν* can be understood as a messianic act of governance.¹⁶ In Isaiah 11, the ideal king’s rule is accomplished through the coming of the Spirit. As noted earlier, four verbs appear in parallel to describe this ideal reign: the first two are *κρίνειν* and *ἐλέγχειν*, while the latter two are *πατάσσειν* and *ἀναιρεῖν*. These indicate an act of governance that transcends mere judicial activity. If *κρίνειν* and *ἐλέγχειν*, as judicial actions of rendering judgment and correcting wrongs, focus on saving and restoring the oppressed, then *πατάσσειν* and *ἀναιρεῖν* emphasize punishing the wicked and removing evil—both carried out through the word of His mouth and the breath or Spirit of His lips.

In LXX Isaiah 2, *κρίνειν* and *ἐλέγχειν* are mentioned again as eschatological acts of divine governance toward the nations. From Zion will proceed the law—that is, the Lord’s word—through which the nations will be taught and ruled. Consequently, the nations will walk in the way of the Lord, and the house of Jacob will likewise be exhorted to walk in His light.

Given that, within the Isaianic context, *ἐλέγχειν* can denote God’s restorative and salvific rule—understood as a messianic ministry or act of governance aimed at leading the oppressed, the nations, and the house of Jacob to walk in the Lord’s way, that is, in His light—it may serve as a valuable hermeneutical key for interpreting the difficult passage in John 16:8–11.

¹⁶ In relation to the messianic reign, although Brown does not engage with the Old Testament context of LXX Isaiah, his commentary on John 16:11 suggests an implicit connection to the Book of Revelation within the Johannine corpus, evoking themes of the Messiah, Satan, and eschatology. Brown’s observation is noteworthy: “We have here in realized form some of what the Book of Revelation describes in terms of final eschatology. While Rev 12:5, 7–12 pictures simultaneously the exaltation of the Messiah and the ejection of Satan from heaven, the binding of Satan (20:2) and his final condemnation to fiery torment (20:10) are yet to come.” Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII–XXI*, 714.

4. Conclusion

In his *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus*, Augustine asserts that we must never think that the Father exists without the Son and the Spirit, nor that the reverse could ever be possible; wherever one of these three is present, the one God who is the Trinity is always present.¹⁷

John 16:8–11 bears witness to the ministry that will take place when the Paraclete comes. If ἐλέγχειν can be understood as a messianic act of governance that, grounded in God's own love, leads to purification through repentance from a former sinful life, then the present paper's attempt to explore the theological implications of its usage in the LXX Isaiah is not in vain. If another aspect of the Paraclete's ministry—purifying in order to redeem and restore Zion as God's dwelling—does not differ from the messianic-eschatological work, then an interpretation of the New Testament text that takes into account continuity with the Old Testament remains valid. Moreover, such an interpretation inevitably directs us, as Augustine expounds, to perceive the presence of the Triune God in the Paraclete's ministry.

If the Gospel of John as a whole testifies to Jesus' kingship in glory, then the ministry of the coming Paraclete, expressed through the verb ἐλέγχειν, can likewise be understood as implying a messianic and eschatological act of royal governance, undertaken for the purpose of purification through repentance and conversion—far surpassing the role of a mere legal advocate or judge.

¹⁷ St. Augustine, *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus* 94.5, quoted in *John 11–21*, vol. 4B of *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament*, ed. Joel C. Elowsky, gen. ed. Thomas C. Oden (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 199.

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