

1 John 3:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

Analysis

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. John declares the present reality and future certainty of believers' identity. "Now are we the sons of God" (nun tekna theou esmen, νῦν τέκνα θεοῦ ἔσμεν) uses the present indicative to affirm our current status—not future hope but present possession. The term tekna (children) emphasizes our birth relationship to God, not mere legal adoption but regeneration producing actual divine life within us.

Yet paradoxically, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be" (oupō ephanerōthē ti esometha). Our glorified state remains hidden, not because it's uncertain but because its glory exceeds present comprehension. The "but we know" (oidamen) introduces certain hope: Christ's appearing will transform us into His likeness. The causal clause "for we shall see him as he is" (hoti opsometha auton kathōs estin) reveals the mechanism—the beatific vision produces transformation. Seeing Christ in His unveiled glory will complete our sanctification, conforming us perfectly to His image (Romans 8:29, 2 Corinthians 3:18).

This verse grounds Christian assurance in both present reality (we are God's children now) and future hope (we shall be like Christ). The Reformed doctrine of perseverance finds support here—those who are God's children now will certainly

be glorified. Our present sonship guarantees our future transformation, because God completes what He begins (Philippians 1:6).

Historical Context

The Johannine community faced Gnostic teachers who claimed special knowledge and present perfection. Some boasted of already achieving divine status through enlightenment. John counters this by affirming that while believers possess real sonship now, our ultimate glorification remains future. This tension between "already" and "not yet" was crucial for combating both presumption and despair.

The concept of divine sonship would have shocked ancient readers accustomed to Roman imperial propaganda claiming the emperor as "son of god." John asserts that ordinary believers—not Caesar—are God's true children. The promise of seeing God "as he is" also contradicted Greek philosophy's abstract deity who remained forever unknowable. John proclaims a God who will reveal Himself fully to His children.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does your present identity as God's child (not future possibility but current reality) affect your daily battles with sin and doubt?
2. What does it mean that seeing Christ 'as he is' will transform us into His likeness, and how does this inform our current pursuit of holiness?
3. How should the certainty of future glorification shape your response to present suffering and incomplete sanctification?

Interlinear Text

Ἄγαπητοί, νῦν τέκνα Θεοῦ ἐσμεν καὶ οὐπω φανερωθῆ

Beloved now the sons of God are we and not yet appear

G27 G3568 G5043 G2316 G2070 G2532 G3768 G5319

τί ἐσόμεθα οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι ἐὰν φανερωθῆ ὅμοιοι

what we shall be we know but for when appear like

G5101 G2071 G1492 G1161 G3754 G1437 G5319 G3664

αὐτὸν ἐσόμεθα ὅτι ὄψόμεθα αὐτὸν καθώς ἐστιν

him we shall be for we shall see him as he is

G846 G2071 G3754 G3700 G846 G2531 G2076

Additional Cross-References

Philippians 3:21 (Parallel theme): Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Colossians 3:4 (Parallel theme): When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (Parallel theme): But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 13:12 (Parallel theme): For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

Romans 8:29 (Parallel theme): For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Psalms 17:15 (Parallel theme): As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

1 Corinthians 15:49 (Parallel theme): And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

Revelation 22:4 (Parallel theme): And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

2 Peter 1:4 (Parallel theme): Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

1 Corinthians 2:9 (Love): But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

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