

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 ἐσμεν) 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

Ἀγαπητοί,	νῦν	τέκνα	Θεοῦ	ἐσμεν	καὶ	οὐπω	φανερωθῇ
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	φανερωθῇ	ὅμοιοι
what	we shall be	we know	but	for	when	appear	like
G5101	G2071	G1492	G1161	G3754	G1437	G5319	G3664
αὐτὸν	ἐσόμεθα	ὅτι	ὁψόμεθα	αὐτὸν	καθώς	ἐστίν	
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 earthy, 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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