

1 John 3:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins;
and in him is no sin.

Analysis

And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. John presents Christ's purpose and qualification for saving sinners. "Ye know" (oïdate) appeals to established Christian truth. "He was manifested" (ephanerōthē, ἐφανερώθη) recalls the incarnation—the eternal Son took visible, bodily form. The purpose clause "to take away our sins" (hina tas hamartias arē) employs airō (αἶρω), meaning to lift up, bear, or remove entirely.

This verb appears in John 1:29: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Christ accomplished this through His substitutionary death—bearing our sins on the cross (1 Peter 2:24), satisfying divine justice, and removing sin's guilt and power. The aorist tense indicates completed action—Christ's work is finished (John 19:30). The result is total removal of sin for those in Him.

"And in him is no sin" (kai hamartia en autō ouk estin) affirms Christ's perfect holiness, essential for His saving work. Only a sinless substitute could bear others' sins without deserving judgment Himself. His sinlessness qualifies Him to be both sacrifice and high priest. This also provides our pattern—union with sinless Christ produces holiness in us. As He had no sin, we who are in Him should not practice sin (v. 6).

Historical Context

The sacrificial system of the Old Testament required unblemished animals for atonement (Leviticus 22:19-25). This prefigured Christ, the Lamb of God without blemish or spot (1 Peter 1:19). First-century Jews familiar with temple sacrifices would understand Christ as the ultimate sacrifice—not merely another animal but God's own Son, whose infinite worth accomplished what endless animal sacrifices could only symbolize.

Against docetic Gnostics who denied Christ's real humanity (claiming He only seemed to have a body), John affirms His manifestation in flesh. Against other heretics who questioned His sinlessness, John unequivocally declares "in him is no sin." Both Christ's true humanity and absolute sinlessness were essential for the atonement.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does Christ's purpose to 'take away' (not merely cover or excuse) your sins affect your assurance of salvation?
2. Why was Christ's sinlessness necessary for Him to take away our sins, and what does this reveal about God's justice?
3. How should your union with sinless Christ affect your attitude toward sin in your own life?

Interlinear Text

καὶ οἶδατε ὅτι ἐκεῖνος ἐφανερώθη ἵνα τὰς ἁμαρτίας
And **ye know** **that** **he** **was manifested** **to** ^{G3588} **sin**
G2532 G1492 G3754 G1565 G5319 G2443 G266

ἡμῶν ἄρῃ καὶ ἁμαρτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν
our **take away** **And** **sin** **in** **him** **no** **is**
G2257 G142 G2532 G266 G1722 G846 G3756 G2076

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 5:21 (Sin): For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Hebrews 9:28 (Sin): So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

1 Peter 2:24 (Sin): Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

1 Peter 3:18 (Sin): For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

Hebrews 9:26 (Sin): For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Hebrews 1:3 (Sin): Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

John 1:29 (Sin): The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

1 Peter 2:22 (Sin): Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

Revelation 1:5 (Sin): And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

Hebrews 4:15 (Sin): For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

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