

Manifestation of the Children of God: Part 2 (3:4-6)

Water of Life

Dr. John Niemelä

February 4, 2016

REVIEW OF 1 JOHN 1:1–2:27

1:1–2:27

Thematic Statement: Boldness at the *Bēma* Requires Abiding in Him (2:28)

Arrangement of the Body of the Epistle:

Theme Announced (2:28)

Body (2:29–4:16)

Theme Realized (4:17-19)

The Manifestation of the Children of God (2:29–3:10a)

Only children of God do righteousness, based upon the fact that Christ is righteous (but humanity is unrighteous) (2:29)

Most interpreters of this verse (e.g., most preachers) commit a simple error of logic:

All dogs are mammals, but not all mammals are dogs.

All men are humans, but not all humans are men.

All who do righteousness are believers, but not all believers do righteousness.

Yet, most interpreters treat this verse as if it said:

~~All believers do righteousness, so those not doing righteousness are unbelievers.~~

~~All dogs are mammals, so dogs are the only mammals.~~

Does this verse affirm that **all believers** do righteousness? _____

Does this verse affirm that **only believers** do righteousness? _____

God bestowed such a great love upon us [apostles and upon you readers] that we [apostles and you reader should be called children of God] (3:1a)

The words “and we are” in 3:1a, though true, are not part of the Majority Text.

Based upon [the fact that the apostles and the readers are God’s children] the world does not recognize the readers [as God’s children], because it did not recognize Jesus Christ [as God’s Son] (3:1b)

Is it easier to recognize a sinless one as God’s Son?

Or is it easier to recognize sinful believers as God’s children?

Since the world did not recognize Him, how could they recognize us?

We apostles [& you readers] are God’s children, but what we [apostles and you readers] shall be [in glorified bodies] has not yet been made manifest (3:2a)

We [apostles & you readers] know that we [apostles & you readers] will be like He is [NOW] when He is made manifest, because [apostles & you readers] shall see Him [THEN] as He is [NOW] (3:2b)

My discussion of the word *manifest* appears at the very end of the notes.

Every one possessing the expectation [of being made like Jesus is NOW, based on His promise] is thereby purified, just as He is pure (3:3)

What does he mean by purifies himself?

A person taking a shower is said to have cleansed himself/herself.

However, was it not the soap and water that did the cleansing?

Similarly, our belief in Christ results in us being cleansed, but it is Christ who does the cleansing (cf. 1 John 1:7)

Everyone who commits sin commits lawlessness, because sin = lawlessness (3:4)

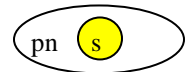
There is a grammatical basis for rendering *is* as *equals* in 3:4b. This particular construction is rare in the NT, so the word *is* can only rarely be understood as equals. The following will clarify how English and Greek differ.

English depends upon word order to distinguish a subject from a predicate nominative. Greek does not do this through word order, but by the presence or absence of an article (the). If only one Greek word in a sentence with a predicate nominative has an article (the), the word with an article is the subject. Italics will represent hyper-literal translations of Greek. Underlining signals the subject (which has an article in Gk) Non-italic represents a good English translation:

The boys are people.

People are the boys.

The boys are people.



In this (common) construction, in which only one article (the) appears in Greek, it means that the subject is a subset of the predicate nominative. Yes, boys are people, they are not the only ones that are people. Girls are people, women are people, and men are people.

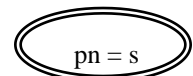
1 John 3:4b has unusual Greek grammar. Both words have an article (the). When this happens, either word can be the subject. When either word can be the subject, the subject equals the predicate nominative. I will use a non-theological illustration:

The twelve is the dozen.

The dozen is the twelve.

The twelve is the dozen.

The dozen is the twelve.

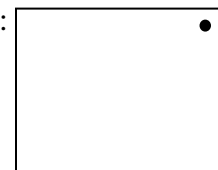


Since sin equals lawlessness, doing a sin equals doing lawlessness.

English translations err in suggesting that John only calls continuing to sin lawlessness. He calls even a solitary sin *lawlessness* (Remember 1 John 1:8 and 1:10).

Why do English translations use the phrase *practices sin* (conveying the wrong idea)?

They do so, because they think that is the solution to verse 6. However, their so-called solution to 3:6 runs afoul of 1 John 1:8 and 1:10, as my illustration shows:



The readers already knew (1) that Jesus Christ was manifested to take away the sins of the apostles [and of believers and of the whole world (cf. 2:2)] and (2) that there is no sin in Jesus Christ (3:5)

Cf. 1 John 1:5. In this context, does the normal “solution” for 3:4 make any sense? If Jesus has no sin and was manifested to take away sin, is it logical to expect for John to take issue only with the idea of continued practice of sin in 3:4? No! He is aiming at any sin, not just at continued sinning. Note also 3:3.

Whoever abides in Him does not sin [while abiding in Him]. (3:6a)

Whoever sins neither has come to see Him nor has come to know Him (3:6b)

Greek perfect tenses can focus on results (e.g., be present in nature)

That is, sin precludes abiding (abiding results in seeing and knowing)

Verse 9 (properly understood) clarifies. Within our dead bodies, there exists the regenerate seed. That part of us does not sin. Therefore, when God looks at the believer who is abiding in Him, He focuses on the seed and upon how we are manifesting who we are. Cf. 3:10.

However, when we are not abiding in Him, there is no real interaction between our regenerate seed and our mind (etc.), so God sees that the regenerate seed is not really having an impact. There is nothing good to see, because we are not manifesting who we are. Cf. 3:10.

CONCLUSION

Manifest (*phaneroō* or *phaneros*) are key words of this section.

²⁸ And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He is **manifest**, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

² Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been **manifested** what we shall be, but we know that when He is **manifested**, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

⁵ And you know that He was **manifested** to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.

⁸ He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was **manifested**, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

¹⁰ In this the children of God and the children of the devil are **manifest**: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor *is* he who does not love his brother.