1 John 4:14 Commentary

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FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN
Click chart to enlarge
Charts from Jensen's Survey of the NT - used by permission
Another Overview Chart - 1 John - Charles Swindoll

BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP		BEHAVIOR OF FELLOWSHIP	
Conditions of Fellowship	Cautions of Fellowship	Fellowship Characteristics	Fellowship Consequences
Meaning of Fellowship 1 Jn 1:1-2:27		Manifestations of Fellowship 1 Jn 2:28-5:21	
Abiding in God's Light		Abiding in God's Love	
Written in Ephesus			
circa 90 AD			

From Talk Thru the Bible

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1 John 4:14 We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world:

Greek - kai hemeis tetheametha (1PRM/PI) kai marturoumen (1PPAI) hoti o pater apestalken (3SRAI) ton huion sotera tou kosmou

Amplified - And [besides] we ourselves have seen (have deliberately and steadfastly contemplated) and bear witness that the Father has sent the Son [as the] Savior of the world.

NLT - Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

Wuest - And as for us, we have deliberately and steadfastly contemplated, and we are testifying that the Father has sent off the Son as Saviour of the world.

- **we have**: 1Jn 1:1-3 5:9 John 1:14 3:11,32 5:39 15:26,27 Ac 18:5 1Pe 5:12
- **Father**: 1Jn 4:10 John 3:34 5:36,37 10:36
- **the Savior**: 1Jn 2:1,2 John 1:29 3:16,17 4:42 12:47
- 1 John 4 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE APOSTOLIC TESTIMONY OF GOD'S SAVIOR

We have seen - NAS leaves off the connective conjunction "**and**" (kai) present in the original Greek. John had stated a similar truth at the beginning of this epistle writing "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life– and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us– what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." (1Jn 1:1-3-**note**)

Notice the Trinitarian emphasis by John - the Spirit in 1Jn 4:13-**note** and here the Father and the Son. We see a similar pattern in Paul's letter to the Galatians

> But when the fulness of the time came, **God** (Father) sent forth His **Son**, born of a woman, born under the Law (cp 1Jn 4:14 ""the Father has sent the Son") , 5 in order that (**term of purpose**) He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, **God** (Father) has sent forth the **Spirit** of His **Son** (1Jn 4:13 "He has given us of His Spirit") into our hearts, crying, "Abba! **Father**!"

We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son - An Apostolic Affirmation. This phrase is similar to John's opening line in which he wrote "What was from the beginning, what **we** have heard, what **we have seen** with our eyes, what **we** have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life (Jesus the Messiah)." (1John 1:1-**note**) The combination of **seen** and **testify** indicates that the apostle's testimony is grounded on their personal experience, their eye witness experience and not on some speculative (or Gnostic) philosophy. **Have seen** is in the perfect tense indicating that their close, careful observation has produced an abiding impact. To be sure, any believer who actually saw the Incarnate Savior of the world must have been forever impacted!

Stott - Christian certainty rests on this combination of the objective and subjective, the historical and experiential, the Son's mission and the Spirit's testimony. As for the Father's sending of his Son, this (John writes) we have seen. The verb is the same as in verse 12. God in himself 'No-one has ever seen', but 'we have seen' the Son whom he sent....God has provided a twofold testimony to Christ, that of the apostles, who witnessed to the historic Jesus whom they had seen and heard (1Jn 4:14), and that of the Holy Spirit, who confirms their witness in the hearts of believers (13). For this double witness see John 15:26–27 and Acts 5:32. (**The Letters of John - Tyndale New Testament Commentary**)

Hiebert adds that "In their association with the incarnate Son, they saw with their own eyes the outworking of His redemptive mission. What they beheld produced in them an abiding conviction concerning His true identity, and the conviction prompted them to "testify" (marturoumen), to continue to bear witness concerning Him. The Christian life rests upon the acknowledged reality of God's revelation of Himself in His Son and a personal acceptance, by faith, of the Son's unique person and ministry." (**The Epistles of John- An Expositional Commentary**) (**See also related journal article** - **1 John 4:7-21 - Excellent**)

Henry Alford - The connection seems to be this: the inward evidence of God's abiding in us and we in Him, is, the gift of His Spirit. But this is not the only evidence nor the only test which we have. This internal evidence is accompanied by, nay, is itself made possible (see 1Jn 4:19-**note**) by, our recognition of the Father's love in sending His Son as our Saviour: which last is a fact, testified by human evidence. (**1 John 4 Commentary**)

Spurgeon - Yes, there is something that we have seen. John writes for himself and his fellow apostles, and he says, "No man hath seen God at any time," but —John saw him live, and saw him die, and saw him when he had risen from the dead, and saw him as he ascended. So he speaks to the matter of eyesight, and bears testimony that, though we have not seen God, we have, in the person of the representative apostles, seen the Son of God who lived and labored and died for us.

Steven Cole - John and the other apostles reported to us their eyewitness testimony about Jesus Christ. The gospel is rooted in verifiable history, that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Jesus did not become the Son of God in the incarnation.

He is the eternal Son of God, and He came to this earth because the Father sent Him to come and die to save us from our sins. It is vital to affirm that the Christian faith does not rest on the philosophic speculations of some creative religious thinkers. It does not rest on inner, personal impressions or mystical visions. Recently in our local paper, a man wrote a letter to the editor in which he claimed that religious faith is simply a matter of personal, subjective experience. Thus there is no such thing as absolute truth in spiritual matters. One person's experience is as good as another's. But if God really exists and if He has revealed Himself to us in His Son, it is false to say that one view is just as true as another. And, it is false to say that religious faith is just a blind leap in the dark. The Christian faith rests upon the historic, apostolic witness to the person of Jesus Christ. They became convinced that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies about God's promised Messiah. They saw His miracles, heard His teaching, and saw Him transfigured in glory on the mountain. Concerning that event, Peter declares (2Pet. 1:16-**note**), "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty." The apostles also watched Jesus die on the cross, they saw Him risen from the dead, and they watched Him ascend into heaven. All of these events, John says, "we have seen." But, of course, these are more than historical notes of quaint interest. These momentous events have to do with Jesus being "the Savior of the world." Savior implies that the world is lost and needs saving. It also implies that the world cannot save itself. It is helplessly, hopelessly lost. It needs more than reviving, because it is dead in its sins. The world refers to the evil system and people who are under Satan's dominion, opposed to God. Thus it implies the wickedness of those who need saving. Jesus came to save sinners. It also looks at the wideness of God's mercy in Christ. He did not come just to save a few Jews. His good news reaches to the utter-most parts of the world. Any sinner, no matter how wicked his life, may believe in Jesus as his Savior and receive eternal life as the gift of God's grace and love. (**1 John 4:12-16 Assurance of Abiding**)

John says we continually (**present tense**) testify to the truth of what (Who) they have seen. **While we have not seen Jesus with our eyes, we have seen Him with the "eyes of our heart" which begs the question "Do I continually testify with my words and deeds that I have seen Jesus?**"

Testify (witness) (3140)(**martureo** from **mártus** = witness = one who has information or knowledge of something and can bring to light or confirm something. Eng = martyr) in its most basic sense refers to a legal witness. Thus the verb **martureo** means to be a witness, to testify, to give evidence, to give testimony, to bear record, to affirm that one has seen or heard or experienced something.

John uses **martureo** more than any other NT writer (46x out of 76 total uses) - Jn 1:7-8, 15, 32, 34; 2:25; 3:11, 26, 28, 32; 4:39, 44; 5:31-33, 36-37, 39; 7:7; 8:13-14, 18; 10:25; 12:17; 13:21; 15:26-27; 18:23, 37; 19:35; 21:24; 1Jn 1:2; 4:14; 5:6-7, 9-10; 3Jn 1:3, 6, 12; Rev 1:2; 22:16, 18, 20.

Has seen (2300)(**theaomai**) from **tháomai** = to wonder, from **thaúma** = wonder, admiration <> English = theatrical spectacular performance) means to have an attentive look, to have regard for something, to contemplate, to take in with one's eyes (implying that one is impressed by what he sees - see use in Mt 22:11). **Theaomai** implies an intent contemplative gaze. The point is that it is not a mere glance or quick look, but a long, searching gaze (e.g., Lk 23:55). **Theaomai** describes intelligent beholding, a "careful and deliberate vision which interprets its object" (G. Abbott-Smith). It means to gaze at a show or demonstration or to watch as in a theater. (thus giving us the origin of our English word "*theater*"). (2) **Theaomai** can mean to see for the purpose of visiting as in Ro 15:24. (3) Finally some lexicon's (BDAG) state theaomai can mean to perceive something above and beyond what is merely seen with the eye (this nuance clearly overlaps with definition #1 above).

In 1Jn 4:14 **theaomai** is in the **perfect tense** which of a past complete action with its present existing results.

The apostle John uses **theaomai** in his Gospel to describe the wonder of beholding "the glory of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." (Jn 1:14-**note**). He uses **theaomai** to describe the "Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven" and remaining on Jesus (Jn 1:32). Jesus uses when he calls on his disciples to "lift up your eyes and look on the fields that...are white for harvest." (Jn 4:35) Jesus used **theaomai** rather than a verb meaning simple sight, because He wanted His disciples not only to see the people streaming out of the city, but to contemplate the meaning and significance of this event. In Jn 11:45 "many of the Jews who came to Mary, and **saw** (**theaomai**) what He had done (raising Lazarus from the dead), believed in Him." These Jews were eyewitnesses to the miracle of Lazarus' resurrection from the dead. Their "seeing" including their contemplating what they saw and the result was that they believed in Jesus.

Three times in this section on love John writes that the Father **sent** His Son - that we might live through Him (1Jn 4:9), as the propitiation for our sins (1Jn 4:10-**note**), and as the Savior of the world (1Jn 4:14). In horse racing a **trifecta** is when the bettor wins by selecting the first three finishers of the race in the correct order. That Jesus would achieve all three of the goals for which He was sent was never in doubt, as His cry underscored -- "**It is finished**." (Jn 19:30) (See discussion of **Tetelestai - It is Finished! Paid in Full!**)

THE GOSPEL IN

A NUTSHELL

He has sent forth His Son to be the Savior of the world- The Good News.

Sent (649)(**apostello** from **apo** = off, away from, speaks of separation + **stello** = appoint to a position this sense in the derivative word apostolos = emissary) literally means to send forth. "To dispatch someone for the achievement of some objective, send away/out." (BDAG) **Apostello** is in the **perfect tense** signifying the permanent effect of the sending of the Son. The sending of the Son has lasting effect! Indeed, the results of the Father's sending the Son will abide throughout eternity in those who have received the Son as their propitiation and Savior. For example in context the result "that we might live through Him" will be everlasting! Hallelujah!

Stott says "The **perfect tense** of the verb (apestalken, 'has sent') points not just to the historical event of the sending, but to the purpose and result of it, namely the salvation of the world." (**The Letters of John - Tyndale New Testament Commentary**)

Vine on **apostello** - lit., "to send forth" (apo, "from"), akin to apostolos, "an apostle," denotes (a) "to send on service, or with a commission." (1) of persons; Christ, sent by the Father, Matthew 10:40; 15:24; 21:37; Mark 9:37; 12:6; Luke 4:18,43; 9:48; 10:16; John 3:17; 5:36,38; 6:29,57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3,8,18 (1st part), Jn 17:21,23,25; 20:21; Acts 3:20 (future); 3:26; 1 John 4:9,10,14; the Holy Spirit, Luke 24:49 (in some texts; see No. 3); 1 Peter 1:12; Revelation 5:6; Moses, Acts 7:35; John the Baptist, John 1:6; 3:28; disciples and apostles, e.g., Matthew 10:16; Mark 11:1; Luke 22:8; John 4:38; 17:18 (2nd part); Acts 26:17; servants, e.g., Matthew 21:34; Luke 20:10; officers and officials, Mark 6:27; John 7:32; Acts 16:35; messengers, e.g., Acts 10:8,17,20; 15:27; evangelists, Romans 10:15; angels, e.g., Matthew 24:31; Mark 13:27; Luke 1:19,26; Hebrews 1:14; Revelation 1:1; 22:6; demons, Mark 5:10; (2) of things, e.g., Matthew 21:3; Mark 4:29 , RV, marg., "sendeth forth," text, "putteth forth" (AV, "... in"); Acts 10:36; 11:30; 28:28; (b) "to send away, dismiss," e.g., Mark 8:26; 12:3; Luke 4:18 , "to set (at liberty)." (**Send - Vine's Expository Dictionary of NT Words**)

The Samaritans "were saying to the woman (who had met Messiah at the well), "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the **Savior of the world**." (Jn 4:42)

The Son the Savior - Literally "the Son Savior." Not "a" Savior, as if He were one among many, but "**the**" one and only Savior (Acts 4:12). The Roman emperors were called Savior (soter) and thus there many "Roman saviors" but there is only one divine Savior!

Barclay - Jesus is **the Savior of the world**. When He came into the world, men were conscious of nothing so much as their own weakness and helplessness. Men, said Seneca, were looking *ad salutem*, for salvation. They were desperately conscious of "*their weakness in necessary things*." They wanted "*a hand let down to lift them up*." It would be quite inadequate to think of salvation as mere deliverance from the punishment of hell. Men need to be saved from themselves; they need to be saved from the habits which have become their fetters; they need to be saved from their temptations; they need to be saved from their fears and their anxieties; they need to be saved from their follies and mistakes. In every case Jesus offers men salvation; He brings that which enables them to face time and to meet eternity. (1 John 4 Commentary - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible)

The Savior of the world - This is an interesting phrase since most of the world rejects Him and is not saved! John is saying regardless of whether men accept Him or not, it does not change the fact that was sent as the Savior, which describes Who He is, not merely what He was sent to do. (See also comments below on "**of the world**").

Wuest explains that "Emperor worship was the state religion of the Roman Empire, and the binding factor that united its far-flung, heterogeneous subject-peoples together in a union stronger than that of any military force. To recognize our Lord as **the Savior of the world** instead of the Emperor was a capital offence, for such recognition was a blow at the very vitals of the Empire. That was the quarrel which Rome had against Christianity, and that was the reason for the bloody persecutions." (**Word Studies from the Greek New Testament**)

Savior (4990) (**soter** from **sozo** = rescue from peril > from **saos** = safe; delivered) refers to the agent of salvation or deliverance, the one who rescues, delivers, saves and preserves. Anyone who saves or delivers can be called a deliverer or rescuer (a soter).

The Romans looked upon their emperor as a "savior" in that he held mankind together under the great Roman power, providing peace and order, prosperity and protection. In the Cult of Caesar, the state religion of Rome, the emperor was actually known as the "Saviour of the world" (at least 8 Roman emperors carried this title)! He was a "Saviour" in that he held mankind together under the great Roman power, providing peace and order, prosperity and protection. In contrast to the Cult of the Caesar, was the "Cult of Christ", in which the Lord Jesus was worshipped as the Saviour God. The former ruled over the temporal affairs of his subjects and was one of their gods. The latter was Saviour in the sense that He saved the believer's soul from sin and exercised a spiritual control over his life. To recognize our God as the Saviour of the world instead of the Emperor was a capital offense, for this recognition was a blow at the very heart of the Roman Empire and explains the reason for the bloody persecution of Christians.

Physicians who healed others were referred to in the Greek culture as "saviors". Human physicians might be able to heal physical sickness but only the Great Physician can heal sin sickness. As alluded to above, in Greek mythology various gods were called soteres (plural) an epithet applied especially to Asclepius, the "god of healing". How tragic to call mere mortals and figments of men's imagination "saviors".

The **Exegetical Dictionary** notes that "In secular Greek usage the gods are deliverers both as helpers of human beings and as protectors of collective entities (e.g., cities); this is the case with Zeus, Apollo, Poseidon, the Dioscuri Castor and Pollux, Heracles, Asclepius as the helper of the sick, and Serapis; it is true also for philosophers (Dio Chrysostom Or. 32.8) and statesmen (Thucydides v.11.1; Plutarch Cor. 11, also in inscriptions and elsewhere). In the Hellenistic ruler cult "theos soter" (god our savior) is attested in writings and inscriptions as a title of the Ptolemies and Seleucids. Inscriptions in the eastern part of the Empire called Pompey "Soter and Founder," Caesar "Soter of the World," and Augustus "Soter of Humankind." Hadrian had the title "Soter of the Kosmos" (Balz, H. R., & Schneider, G. . Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans)

Soter is also used in the Greek translation of the OT (Septuagint), virtually always describing God as Savior. For example, Psalm 27:1 translated from the Greek reads "The Lord is my light and my **Saviour**" compared to the translation from Hebrew -- "The LORD is my light and my **salvation**."

Marvin Vincent has a lengthy note on **Savior** - The Saviour of the world. See the same phrase, John 4:42, and compare John 3:17. **soter** - Saviour, occurs in John only here and John 4:42. Elsewhere it is applied both to God (1Ti 1:1; 2:3; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4; Jude 1:25), and to Christ (Luke 2:11; Acts 5:31; 13:23; 2Ti 1:10; Titus 1:4, etc.). The title is found in Paul's Epistles of the Captivity (Eph. 5:23; Philip. 3:20), and in the Pastorals (see above), but not in Corinthians, Romans, Galatians, or Thessalonians. In classical writings the term is applied to many deities, especially to Zeus (Jupiter); also to Hermes (Mercury), Apollo, Hercules, and even to female deities, as Fortune and Aphrodite (Venus). "Zeus Soter" (Zeus Saviour) was used as a formula in drinking at banquets. The third cup was dedicated to him. Compare Plato: "Then, by way of a third libation to the saviour Zeus, let us sum up and reassert what has been said" ("Philebus," 66). The drinking of this cup was a symbol of good fortune, and the third time came to mean the lucky time. "Twice then has the just man overthrown the unjust; and now comes the third trial, which, after Olympic fashion, is sacred to Zeus the saviour, … and surely this will prove the greatest and most decisive of falls" (Plato, "Republic," 583). Hence the proverb, the third to the saviour; i.e., the third or lucky time. The name was also given later to princes or public benefactors.

In John 4 after the Samaritan woman believed in Messiah she went to town and told others who "were saying to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the **Savior of the world**." (John 4:42)

Of the world (**kosmos**) is not the **world** as a neutral entity, but as the inveterate enemy of God (and every believer). **BDAG** says that **kosmos** is "the world, and everything that belongs to it, appears as that which is hostile to God, i.e. lost in sin, wholly at odds w. anything divine, ruined and depraved." **Marvin Vincent** says that **kosmos** is "The sum-total of human life in the ordered world, considered apart from, alienated from, and hostile to God, and of the earthly things which seduce from God (Jn 7:7; 15:18; 17:9, 14; 1Co 1:20, 21; 2Co 7:10; Jas 4:4-**note**). Akin says that kosmos is "an evil organized earthly system controlled by the power of the evil one (1Jn 5:19-**note**) that has aligned itself against God and His kingdom (1Jn 4:3-5-**note**; 1Jn 5:19; Jn 16:11)."

Hiebert adds the **world** refers to "sinful society, estranged from God and under the dominion of the evil one (cf. 1Jn 5:19**note**). Its urgent need was to be rescued from sin and Satan." The scope of His saving work is comprehensive—all humanity, not merely the "enlightened Gnostics" or the chosen Jewish people. "There is no limit but the willingness of men to accept salvation by believing on the Saviour. (Plummer)" (**The Epistles of John- An Expositional Commentary**) (**See also related journal article** - **1 John 4:7-21 - Excellent**)

John mentions **world** three times in this section on love (1Jn 4:7-21-**note**) - "God has sent His only begotten Son into the **world** that we might live through Him" (1Jn 4:9-**note**), "the Father as sent the Son to be the Savior of the **world**." (1Jn 4:14-**note**), "As He is, so also are we in this **world**." (1Jn 4:17-**note**) God clearly demonstrates His love for the world in these passages, sending His Son as Savior, giving us His Son's life and leaving us on earth so that others might see Him in us (1Jn 4:17-**note**)!