

[00:00:16] Happy Super Bowl Sunday. BAKER Yeah. Super Bowl Sunday over in the sanctuary. Maybe you're listening online. So I think there are really three different types of fans here today. I see someone in Jersey I wonder if there would be any jerseys showing up today. That would be an Eagles jersey. Yes. I think there were of course Eagles fans anyone here an Eagles fan today. How come all patriots anyone. And then I think the third category. You may not be an Eagles fan you just don't want the Patriots to win.

[00:01:03] I thought that may grab a bunch. I think that's probably me.

[00:01:09] I'm on record. But. I just keep winning. I don't know. Come on. I need someone else to win again. That's right. So it's it's a great day and we are making our way through the Gospel of John. Grab your bibles widget your handhelds. Dig in with me. Church we're digging into John. And this year we're literally going to read think about examine every word. And in fact I want to make you students of the Bible as we really make our way through this. I'm going to just start with a principal even as we dig into John one again today and it's this principle the way the Bible is written tells us as much as what is written what that means what I mean when I say that and what biblical interpreters when they read a text you're not just you're not just reading it in a kind of just a fly by fly over it sort of a way you're really listening to not just the words but the order of the words. Why did God arrange things the way that he did. Because quite honestly as we dig into John one I'm going to be honest as I look at John one one through 18 we're going to go back and just relook at one through 18 as we dig into the rest of the. The next section of the scripture that has to do with John the Baptist. I was really struck by the fact that if I were the editor of John one which I'm not. This is the Holy Spirit's work.

[00:02:46] But if I were the editor of John one I would have changed a few things. I really would. And let me kind of illustrate what I mean by that. We appreciate Nathan reading for us here in the baker from John 1 1 through 5 in the beginning was the Word the Word was with God the Word was God was God. He was with God JESUS JESUS IS THE WORD IN THE BEGINNING.

[00:03:12] We're talking all the way back before the even the creation of time the scope of all things through him all things were made. So John is taking us back to eternity past even before time and light were created without him. Nothing was made that has been made in him was life and that life was the light of all mankind. The light. So this is where John goes right out of the gate as he's describing Jesus. The light shines in the darkness. And the darkness has not overcome it. Now what I've put there is a dash and I jump a diverse nine. The true light that gives light to every one was coming into the world see in verse 5 establishing the light shining in the darkness and then he says in verse 9 the true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world that to me just really has an ice flow to it so if I'm the editor of John one which I'm not God is but if I'm the editor that's how I would have edited it. Just seems like a natural flow but what did I leave out.

[00:04:25] Boom six seven and eight or six. There was a man.

[00:04:31] Sent from God whose name was John. Well wait wait a minute. Why am I learning about him right now. Just keep me on this upper flow. But we hear about Johnny gets tucked in there. I actually would have put verse 6 down right before Verse 19 right now. This was John's testimony so we start in Verse 19 with John the Baptist and his role in this whole story to me. There was a man sent from God whose name was John works way better after 18 and before 19 because then we shift to that but no we've got John there in the middle. And then jump down to like verse 14 the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory the glory of the one and only son who came from the father. All right now we're talking about the glory of Jesus and how what word does John use to express the glory of Jesus full Jesus came full of grace and truth. And then we jump down to a verse 16 right. Four out of his what fullness we have all received grace and place of grace already give that to me just has a much better flow to it. 14 down to 16. And yet what's tucked in there now.

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[00:05:55] 15 right. This little parentheses that again refers us to who to John the Baptist. Why does John the Baptist keep interrupting the flow of this thought.

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[00:06:08] If I'm the editor of the Bible which I'm not God is but to me verse 15 would work way better between verses 20 and 21. I'm not the messiah. John said for John testifiers 15 concerning him. He cried out saying this is the one I spoke of. And then they asked him Who are you are you. So as I read this I think oh why does John keep popping up in the middle of this glorious theological statement of Jesus. Just seems a little.

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[00:06:43] Out of place to me. Why does John the Apostle introduce us to John the Baptist like this. Again I would just simply positive that. For me all about you. But for me it just seems so out of place. But what was the principle. The way things are written are just as important as what is said so that ought to Kuis into something as we read through scripture. We need to take a step back and say OK Okay obviously God had a reason. For inserting these little tidbits about John before he actually gets to the part of the story that describes John the Baptist so why did he do it. That's kind of what I want to get us to because there's something to be learned. Big time. And I've to help explain it. I've talked about in last few years we talked about the upper story in the lower story how we can view life through these two lenses the upper story being what God is doing in the scope of history the big picture the the the macro you know how God is in control of all things that we are part of of an upper story of God's unfolding in the big picture the lower story of course is

our lives every day how we live out the upper story in our lower story individual lives.

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[00:08:15] And I'm going to tell you right now that as a last world experiences Gog has a lost world experiences. God I'm telling you right now. They have a general sense of the upper story. When

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[00:08:34] they see the fact the Bible talks about this when they see this upper story of eternity past creation in light the word incarnate rebirth and life.

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[00:08:45] This is John 1 1 through 18. This is the basic flow of thought. And as the world experiences God they might see the beauty of a thunderstorm and think wow what power is you know where does that come from.

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[00:09:01] The beautiful clouds in the sky or sunsets to see the beauty of the earth in a sunset or you know we couldn't quite see it here in Franklin County but the super blue blood red moon right.

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[00:09:15] That happens once every 150 years or just the galaxies.

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[00:09:21] So yes I believe a lost world when they see the majesty of creation they might get a sense of John 1 1 through 18 the upper story but you know how a lost world how each and every one of us are truly going to experience the love of God.

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[00:09:46] How are we going to truly experience the knowledge the saving knowledge that Jesus is the light that he is the way I will tell you right now. Someone needs to tell there needs to be a very specific testimony. You see God doesn't just stop with all creation and he doesn't just stop with the upper story God doesn't just stop there. Thanks BDM which leads me to principle to God's way of letting the light shine in the world.

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[00:10:23] You is through us and I'm going to tell you right now I believe this principle is the answer to the question why does John the Baptist keep showing up in odd places. In chapter 1 verses 1 through 18.

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[00:10:40] Because as John is making this upper story case of an awesome God the light of the world the light shining in the darkness that Jesus is the life of all of humanity.

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[00:10:53] We just keep seeing John showing up in that moment connecting us to the fact that the way people hear that message is through us God's way of pushing back the darkness. Is us that each and every day we are the light of Christ. And I believe that's exactly why god chose to keep inserting John the Baptist in there because he's making the upper story case and then he says and you know what John came to point to him just like we come into the world and come into people's lives to point them to Jesus so let's keep going I I've referenced these introductions to John. But now let's hear his story. Now this was John's testimony. And by the way I'll clue you into a few things as we read. We're going to hear some language here with respect to John the Baptist that really kind of harkens to to what it means to make a case to give witness we have some language here that you might hear even in a courtroom testimony witness right. Those are some kind of courtroom language. Now this I just want to clue you into that because that's kind of how John comes John the Apostle comes at what John the Baptist really did. He made a case for Christ. This was John's testimony by the way was testimony when you're called upon to give a testimony are you just kind of making stuff up off the top of your head when you're giving testimony.

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[00:12:34] You let's say I hope not. If you're sworn into a court of law you're like in trouble if you start making stuff up. Right. Because the testimony is written. I'm sorry. Rooted in what truth and experience right.

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[00:12:53] Isn't a testimony rooted in what you've experienced. This has happened to me. This is my. Testimony.

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[00:13:02] This is my experience. This is what I have seen what I have heard what I have experience. This was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was who are you.

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[00:13:21] Who are you.

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[00:13:22] And I'll tell you or I'll play you right now the fact that they had a real bias because later on when they asked Jesus who he was he referenced back to this very moment and he said all right John's testimony was it from God or was it from man.

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[00:13:38] And they thought if we say it was from God then we got to believe everything we said but if we say it was from a man then people are going to rise up against us because everyone in those times really kind of thought John was from God. So they said to Jesus we don't know and Jesus then said then neither do I know I got nothing to say because you're putting me in a tree.

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[00:13:59] People came to John in that room.

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[00:14:01] Who are you he did not fail to confess but freely confessed.

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[00:14:08] I am not the messiah I'm going to clue you into another interesting word and it's the word not over and over again in this brief passage we run into the word not what does that mean.

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[00:14:23] Why does John keep John the Baptist keeps saying not. And I want to I want to put before you the concept of. Of of mirror mirror theology. OK what do you mean by that. What's a Mirror's motto. All right stick with me on this. What is a Mirror's motto. If a mirror were to have a motto mirror mirror on the wall what is your motto. What would you say a mirrors model motto is this.

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[00:14:49] It's not about me. It isn't a mirror. Constantly say that you look at a mirror and what's that mirror saying.

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[00:14:56] This about you. It's not about me it's about you. It is not about me that's a mirror model motto It's all about you.

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[00:15:03] Remember song we sang a couple of decades ago in the church. It's all about you. Geez. It's not about me. For Your Glory and your fame. That's what John says they say. Who are you. Who says I am.

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[00:15:20] Not the Messiah. They said then who are you. Are you like are you Alijah because Alijah are right in the Old Testament is one of the two guys in the Old Testament that didn't die. He was caught up by Chariots of Fire and taken up into glory Elijah never died neither neither did a guy named Enoch way back in the early part of Genesis. He walked with God. The Bible says and then he was not for God took him. He beamed them up. So we've got these two men are they said Are you a reincarnation of Elijah. What did he say.

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[00:15:50] I'm not. That's not who I am.

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[00:15:52] Are you the prophet. This is referring back to Deuteronomy when Moses made a prophetic statement about one day there will come a prophet and he really was describing Jesus but they're saying are you the prophet and so no not was not me.

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[00:16:09] Finally they said Who are you. Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. We've got to have an answer.

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[00:16:19] What do you say about yourself. John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet.

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[00:16:24] I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness make straight the way for the Lord. I am here to just lay out a path for Jesus. God is using me to introduce his truth his message his light into the world.

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[00:16:42] Now the pharisees who had been sent to him they jumped in earlier was the chief priests and Levites. Now it's a different group of people. Why then do you baptize if you are not the messiah. Or if you're not a Lija or if you're not the prophet he says I baptized with water but among you stands one.

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[00:17:01] You do not know. So he's indicating in the crowd there is the very one that he came to introduce. So

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[00:17:11] he's the one who comes after me the straps of whose sandals I am what not worthy to untie. This all happened at Bethany the other side of the Jordan where John was baptizing and the next day John saw Jesus coming toward him.

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[00:17:30] Now let me just pause there to say John and Jesus are second cousins there. They're related.

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[00:17:38] And I've also been to Galilee region to Nazareth into these areas and it's not a large area. I mean it really isn't.

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[00:17:47] So I am quite certain that John would have known Jesus. And yet to this point Jesus had not revealed himself as the Messiah.

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[00:18:02] John would have I'm sure known Jesus as an amazing man as a great moral person he never seemed to do anything wrong. I know I know that he would have known him that way.

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[00:18:15] But you see up to this point Jesus had not been revealed as the Messiah in fact as John was preparing to begin his ministry as God was calling John God had said to him you don't know who the Messiah is when you see heaven opened and the sun and the spirit of God descending on him then you'll know who the guy is so this is his testimony. John says he sees Jesus look the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world this is the one I meant when I said a man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me eternal. I myself did not know him well he knew him as his second cousin but he didn't know truly who he was. But the reason I came baptizing with water was so that he might be revealed. Then John gave again. What's the word.

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[00:19:12] Testimony this testimony and a testimony is just it's not theology it's not making stuff up or it's not anything you know it's just what's happened to you. This was his testimony. I saw the spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I saw that happening. I watched it. I heard the voice from heaven say that everyone or this is my son whom I love and whom I am well pleased. John knew that he knew that he knew that that had happened. And he also knew God had told him when that happened or something like it. He's the guy. So John is simply giving this testimony. I myself did not know why I knew who he was but I didn't know him in that way. But the one who sent need to baptize with water God told me the man on whom you see the spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.

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[00:20:14] I have seen and John says I testify that this is God's chosen one So John's complete job here is to reflect the glory of Jesus. His whole job was to point people to Jesus to tell others about Jesus. Which to me speaks to what God is doing here and John one. Yes. The upper story Jesus is the word. He is awesome he is. Before time and after time he is the light of the world the life of all human kind. But then John comes to tell people to give testify testimony to that reality and as we think about what a witness does a witness doesn't have to come up with anything they just tell others what they themselves have seen as this soaking in a witness just simply describes what they've seen and are they're not making anything up.

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[00:21:17] They don't have to be deep theological scholars or even have gone and gotten a degree in the Bible.

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[00:21:23] No I'm just telling you what I've seen a pastor friend of mine was telling the story about how when he went to a church this was out in Oregon when he went

to a church to become the senior pastor there was already this huge lawsuit. It was he said it was just so sad someone was suing the church. And he got sucked into it as the new pastor and he was just it was grinding him up. Of course it was because it was just tearing the Church and you know he said we should have been sitting down together and praying free with each other. And here we are in a courtroom and he said he went one morning. He had to give a deposition and he said the whole morning like three hours. He was trying to figure out why and give this this and that.

[00:22:05] That and he said it just didn't go well I was so torn up and we took a lunch break. He said the attorney my attorney came and he said stop it. It was John John stop. You said you're not the judge. You're not the jury. You're not the attorney. You said all you've got to do is just tell what you know just give your testimony. And John said it felt like a weight had been lifted off the shoulder he said he went in and about 30 minutes later he told him everything you know and walked out. He did his job. He was just a witness. So we are called to be what witnesses to the life to the light.

[00:22:45] That is how God works in this world and you know we can often find ourselves asking God to do in us what he's done in somebody else. Oh I don't have much of a testimony. How many times have I heard that you know I you know I just kind of have a normal life. I.

[00:23:05] Wait a minute. What has God done in your life. What is God done for you.

[00:23:11] Just tell others what God has done for you because church this is how God works in the world. Yes we are part of the upper story but the only way people are going to experience God and know his life and life is through us.

[00:23:30] We are his witnesses. And I believe that's exactly why God kept inserting John the Baptist into this high theology to say yes and John gave testimony to this truth.

[00:23:41] And John came to tell others about this is exactly what he's called us to do God's ultimate purpose isn't that we know more about Jesus but that we experience life in his name. That's his purpose. And the only way that's going to happen for others the way it's happened for us is for someone to tell us about and we are then all given. An invitation and God is giving this invitation through us. And what is the invitation I want to conclude today by using some words that. Probably one to one of without question the greatest evangelists ever. He's still alive. His name is Billy Graham Billy Graham's and his hundred the year he has probably I would say led more people to Jesus than anyone else in the history of the world in our lifetime.

[00:24:40] John Billy Graham and Billy Graham.

[00:24:44] He would be an expert on allowing God to speak through you and what God the invitation. And this is what he said. Let me just share in the words of Billy Graham.

[00:24:55] He said again and again in the Bible men and women are graciously invited to enter into personal fellowship with God. Someone has said that the Bible is a book of invitations from God to us urging us to become his partners. Here you go in redeeming the world.

[00:25:13] Urging us to become his partners in the lower story redeeming the world. The first invitation Jesus offers us is an invitation to wrest the entirety of this Jesus said Come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden. And I will give you rest Matthew 11.

[00:25:35] Since the early dawn of humankind when our Eden of bliss became a desert of discord. Welcome to the earth. We have been creatures of restlessness. We are bereft of the peace that comes from God through the saving grace of Christ. We become fish out of water divorce alcoholism immorality all direct results of the restlessness of sin. This diabolical unrest has permeated our nation like a contagious disease and has become the underlying cause of domestic community and societal problems. He wrote this six years ago. It's not getting any better. The basic cause of our national immorality is this spiritual unrest in people's lives today in my travels around the country I have sensed unrest in almost every phase of our modern day living this changeable unsettling roving transience sleepless and fidgety spirit is due to the restlessness of the human heart and its separation from the Christ of tranquility and peace. These insecure individuals could find spiritual peace and physical rest by surrendering their lives to Christ. Everyday I come in contact with mixed up paradoxical people rich people who are held in the grip of insecurity intellectual people who have lost their way strong people who live in fear of weakness and defeat. I long to take every one of them by the hand and lead them into the presence of Jesus who said come on to me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

[00:27:24] Why die of thirst when you stand on the brink of a lake. Why starve to death when you're within arm's length of living bread. Why live in a hovel of spiritual misery. When Christ has provided a mansion of divine peace here and accept the invitation to day come on to me and I will give you rest. But rest is not all that weary people need.

[00:27:51] Other invitations to happiness await the distressed who will dare to follow Christ. A second invitation is to discipleship during our meetings our crusades. Thousands of young people have surrendered their lives to Christ for full time Christian service. Young people want adventure and excitement. They want more they want something to believe in a cause to give of themselves a flag to follow the only cause that is big enough is the cause of Jesus Christ and the flag is the blood stain body that was lifted on the cross of Calvary. This invitation to discipleship is

the most thrilling ever to come to humankind. Just imagine being a working partner. With God in the redemption of the world and the third invitation is to live in the realm of God. Jesus said Abidan me and I in you. John fifteen personal salvation is not an occasional rendezvous with deity. It is an actual dwelling with God. Christianity is not an avocation. It is a life long eternity long vocation. In my travels around the world to preach the gospel I have been surrounded by angry mobs. I've walked down dangerous jungle trails. I've been in storms on the sea. I have walked down streets where every I was hostile sounds all like Paul Dunant in the midst of a thousand dangers. I have sensed the all protecting presence of God himself. These three invitations are not mine. They are given by Jesus himself.

[00:29:37] No man or woman has ever found complete rest apart from Christ to the multitudes of distressed troubled and weary. He beckons come to me and I will give you rest. Do you want no rest joy peace security affection.

[00:29:57] Do you want to know what it means to belong surrender and commit your life and your heart to Jesus. I guarantee that you can no peace with God.

[00:30:08] Peace of soul peace of mind and joy like you've never experienced Jesus.

[00:30:16] We humbly come before you today. We are so grateful for the invitation.

[00:30:23] You have given to all of us and more than that God that you have called us to be a part of your work in this world. That we not only understand this invitation but we are able Lord Jesus to invite others to know you.

[00:30:42] Lord may be the conviction of this message. Maybe the question I've asked earlier in the message is still kind of churning on someone's heart.

[00:30:51] What has God done for you or maybe there's someone sitting here over in Sanctuary listening online that just can honestly answer.

[00:31:01] I don't know. I believed in my head but I never believed in my heart. I don't have this piece I don't experience this joy. My life is a mess. I really have no testimony.

[00:31:15] Or Jesus if that's the case.

[00:31:18] And right now right now we need to surrender to you need to give you our heart.

[00:31:25] Give your lives Lord Hills touch us transform us give us life.

[00:31:33] Give us this peace Lord that Billy Graham describes even walking down the most dangerous streets of the world with every guy shooting daggers that he

would know and experience the all surpassing awesome divine spiritual presence of you in and with us.

[00:31:52] God if there's anyone listening right now that needs to know that he's come we open our hearts to you Jesus fill us live in us. Change Us. Lord give us a testimony so that we can be your light to others in a dark world. Lord Jesus we give you our heart.

[00:32:16] Jesus name.