

P Levy John 6v42, 202101225 Christmas Day service

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Date: 22 January 2021

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[0 : 00] I want to speak to you from the verse that's on that little slip. John chapter 6 and verse 42. If you've got a Bible, it's on page 892. That might help you to follow along. John 6 and verse 42.

! Isn't that a great question? And they're listening to Jesus and they say, we know he comes from down the road, but he says that he comes from heaven. How are we going to put this together? And I think that that's the problem that lots of people have at Christmas time.

They think about Jesus, they think he's harmless, but they fear that he's powerful. They would like a way to forget about him, but for some reason they just can't forget about him.

So you notice it with Christmas concerts, don't you? Christmas concerts, they lurch from Harper Herald to Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. They go from, I'm a commonly faithful, straight into Jingle Bells.

There's a disjunct, isn't there? Will they go somewhere else or will they go his way? Will we go in the opposite direction from him or will we go towards him?

[1 : 31] And I think that's what's going through the minds of the people who are asking this question. And I want to show you just in a few moments that number one, it's a question. It's a good question. It's a bad question. And it's a key question.

And I don't want to waste your time this morning. I hope for those of us who do believe in the Lord Jesus, it'll cause you to be thankful and rejoice again. And I'm hoping for those of you who don't yet belong to the Lord Jesus, that you'll be attracted to him.

So just look at the statement again, the question again. Can you see it's a question and not a statement? And the people are thinking, aren't they? And a question means they want more information.

You go to your doctor and your doctor says, what's the problem? And you say, I've got a headache. I've had it for about a week. And he says, let's take some x-rays. The thinking person says, is there a problem?

Are you afraid of something, doctor? The unthinking person walks out the door and asks the way to the x-ray room. The thinking person asks for more information.

[2 : 45] And here's a question. Jesus has performed a miracle. A miracle. He's fed probably about 10,000 people. 5,000 men, it says. But there would have been women and children there too. And he's fed them all with a packed lunch.

They didn't question the miracle. They didn't say, did it happen? Or didn't it happen? They knew it happened. They questioned the message that came after the miracle.

Because Jesus has said to them, the bread that I gave you yesterday when I fed you from that packed lunch, that keeps going for about a day. But he says, I am the true bread which comes down from heaven.

And if I enter your life, you'll live eternally. And so they ask the question, what is this bit about coming down from heaven?

So they're not making a statement. They're not just saying to one another, listen, he's just from Joseph's house. We know his dad. Forget about the come down from heaven bit.

[3 : 48] They don't do that. Lots of people do that today. And they don't know what Jesus said exactly. They don't listen to what he said. They don't care for much of what he said.

But they say in their brain, he's nothing special. So just let him go. Don't let him get to you. Don't let Christians get to you. Jesus is just an option. If you like him, well that's fine. If you don't like him, that's fine.

And that's the way people think. They make a statement. But these people in Jesus' day, they don't yet follow him. They don't yet completely understand him. They don't particularly like him. But they're awake enough to ask a question. The second thing is it's a good question. Because the issues are so big. I read about a question this week from a man who was taken to Ohio in the U.S. And he was taken to Ohio in the U.S. to be shown a postmodern building. It was a postmodern building built by a postmodern architect. And a postmodern architect is one that celebrates meaninglessness.

[4 : 51] Meaninglessness. And so they've built this building in Ohio. It's called the Wien Center. And it's a center, I think, for performing arts. And the architect has built into the building meaninglessness.

So there are pillars which support absolutely nothing. There are staircases that go nowhere. What would you say if you were being shown this building?

Well, this man asked a very important question. A clever question. He said to the architect, he said, you've played with the pillars. And you've played with the stairs. My question is, did you play with the foundations?

And that's a really good question, isn't it? Because you can play with pillars and it doesn't matter. And you can play with the stairs and it's no big deal. But you can't play with the foundations. There is stuff in life that you can muck around with.

And there's stuff that you can't muck around with. And that is a good question, isn't it? Now the question on your sheets in John 6.42 is a good question.

[5 : 59] Because Jesus did actually grow up down the road. He was born to Mary. He was a local boy. He'd been an apprentice in a carpenter shop. He didn't just turn up suddenly.

But then he says, I've come down from heaven. And it seems ridiculous to talk like that. But again, Jesus is no ordinary boy, is he?

The day before, he's fed 5,000 to 10,000 people with a few loaves and fish. So these people are trying to do something really important. They're trying to weigh up what they see and what they know.

And you've got to do that. And they're also trying to weigh up what Jesus says and what Jesus does. And you've got to do that. If you're going to make an intelligent decision, a decision of integrity about Jesus, you'll have to weigh up what you see and what you know.

And you'll have to weigh up what he says and what he does. And that is what these people are seeking to do. So he does come from down the road. And he does say, I've come down from heaven.

[7 : 06] And how are you going to bring those things together? Everyone who faced Jesus in the New Testament was wrestling with those sorts of questions. And everyone who uses their minds today when they think of Christianity and Christ is going to have to wrestle with those questions.

So can I let you into a secret? I don't lose any sleep over Santa anymore. There was a time in my life when I lost some sleep over Santa.

Things appeared in my pillowcase at the end of my bed. And I heard that Santa got round to every house in all the world in one night.

And I had to wrestle with that. But I've kind of worked it out. I don't want to give too much away, but I've worked it out. So I don't lose any sleep over Santa.

His cause does not occupy my brain. Now let me be honest with you. I don't lose any sleep about Buddha. Or Mohammed.

[8 : 23] I've read some of their works. I've read accounts of their lives. I've read about their deaths. I don't see that there's a compelling case why I should take notice of them. But when I come to the person of Jesus, and when I see the things that he did, when I see the feedings and the healings and the raising and showing himself to be the complete master of the world and his raising on the third day to show that death is defeated, and I look at his claims, that he says, I came down from heaven, and he says, I predate the world, and I will judge you at the end of the world, and I can forgive you so that you can face me safely.

And your future and eternity depends entirely upon me. I weigh up those claims and those deeds, and I cannot dismiss him.

He deserves a decision, and that is why this question is a good one. What are you going to do with this person? He comes from just down the road, born in Bethlehem, but he says he comes from

heaven.

And we live in a culture, don't we, where lots of people don't think. Somebody has said that the motto of the 21st century is whatever. That we're moving away from thinking.

That same writer says, we're all in danger of acting like tiny little children who make emotional decision after emotional decision, and then if necessary, we look for a rational explanation to back it all up.

[10:00] There's a bus advert in Greenford, as I was walking through it recently, which said, live now, think later. That's exactly the message, isn't it? Live now, think later.

The problem is, it's a self-defeating advertisement. Because it's telling me that I've got to think about that. I've got to think about the message in order to not think.

Well, the people in Jesus' day are thinking, and I like that they're thinking. I would rather much rather than somebody was thinking and angry rather than just asleep. These people in Jesus' day, there are two possible backgrounds for Jesus.

There's house of Joseph or heaven. He seems pretty natural, but he talks supernaturally. He's born of Mary, but he seems to imply he's been sent into the world.

He did come from inside Mary. He was in a manger, but he says he was an outsider. And I like the fact that they just won't share of the issue. It's a great thing to ask the question.

[11:08] Especially on the person of Jesus, because the issues are so big. So the third point is this. It's also a bad question. Because it's a prejudiced question. If you hear your Bibles open on page 892, you'll see that in verses 43 and 44, it's a question that's really grumbling.

Jesus says, stop grumbling. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me. And Jesus is saying to this crowd, he's saying, you are distancing yourself from me.

The problem is not me, the problem is you. And sadly, these people who are asking this question, they don't want, they're not attracted to the Lord Jesus, they want out.

And when they say this is Joseph's son, that is what they want to go with. They just want him to be Joseph's son. And so we ask the question, why is there so little attraction to Jesus in the world?

If you look at his life, he's the greatest person that ever lived. He consistently did good. And he offers infinitely more to those who trust him.

[12:25] Where is the repellent part of Jesus? What is repulsive about Jesus? He feeds a massive crowd. He's obviously kind. He offers himself for eternity.

He doesn't say, I hate you. He doesn't say, do better. He doesn't say, be religious. He doesn't say, save yourself with a thousand bits of religious ritual. He says, I've come to give you life.

I've come to give myself. I've come to give you hope. It's yours. If you will take it. And I think the reason is obvious.

It's because he's a king. Because he's a rival. I've been thinking about the Christmas chapters. I wonder whether you do that.

I wonder whether you think today, who are you most like in the Christmas narrative? Don't say the donkey. Who is the person who is most like you? I'll tell you the person who is most like me.

[13:32] King Herod. You know King Herod? He's the one who believes in Jesus. He knew that he'd been born a king. Please tell me where he is that I may go and worship him too.

And of course, he's not planning to worship him one little bit. He's planning to get rid of him.

Because he saw Jesus to be a rival. And deep down, that's what I'm like.

Deep down, that's what I'm like naturally. I'm dismissive and rejecting of Jesus because he comes to us as a rival. It's one of the reasons why atheism is so popular, isn't it?

Atheism is not kind of intellectual revolt. As if Christianity has suddenly been exposed in the last 50 years and our eyes have been opened. No. Atheism is also a moral revolt.

It's not that Jesus is unbelievable. It's just he's uncooperative. Dinesh D'Souza wrote this.

[14:36] He said, he's an Indian writer. He said, in his book, What's So Great About Christianity? He says this, if you want to live a degenerate life, God is your mortal enemy. He represents a lethal danger to your selfishness, greed, and lechery, and hatred.

It's in your interest to despise him and do whatever you can to rid the universe of his presence.

There are powerful attractions to life in a God-free world. And even those of us who are here this morning who trust in Jesus, and we're so grateful for him, we know deep down that inside of us there's something that kicks against, doesn't it?

We don't like the fact that he is supreme, that he's superior. So why is it that people don't move towards Jesus? The popular answer is we don't want to.

And we think that if we do want to, well, we will when it suits us. But Jesus says the exact opposite. So let me read to you from chapter 6, verse 44. He says, no one can come to me, nobody comes, unless the Father who sent me draws that person.

If you think of a magnet, the magnetic tendency of our heart is against Christ. We're repelled from him. unless God changes the magnet round so that we're pro-Christ.

[16:04] This strange repulsion that we have to the most attractive person who's ever walked the earth. But if this morning we will send up that little prayer, Lord, help me, this is not right.

There's something wrong with me and there's nothing wrong with him. Please help me. But left to ourselves, we have no desire, no power until God works in us.

And that's what the Bible tells us, that's what experience tells us, that's what my experience in Christian ministry tells me. That people have no desire and no power to come to Jesus until God changes us. It doesn't absolve us of our responsibilities.

He's given us plenty of evidence which we turn back to him. And so we cry out this morning, don't we, I hope?

You've done so much, Lord, so clearly. Please help me respond to this properly. Can you see it? The human heart needs grace from God even to turn all the evidence that's been given us into us being attracted to the attractive and stop this strange repulsion to the Lord Jesus.

[17:19] And that's why every Christian here this morning can say, it's not that they just figured it out. It's that God has done his work. And we didn't deserve it, but he brought us out of our prejudice and our gratitude.

gratitude. The last question before I finish quickly is, it's a key question. It's a key question. It's a good question because the issues are big.

It's a bad question because they ask it in a prejudiced way. But it's a key question because it brings up the gospel when you bring together the heavenly boy Jesus and the local boy Jesus.

And you bring them together like two electrical currents. two electrical wires and the current of faith goes through them. Because Jesus did actually leave heaven.

There was a moment in history where Jesus got off his throne and he came down into the war zone of a world like ours, to people like us, who are anti-him and yet he still came down.

[18:24] Because there's someone behind this universe who is better than anyone could invent or produce and that person is Jesus Christ. And he is the maker of the universe, he is the lover of the ungodly and he is the lover of the ugly.

And just like a parent who's got the most ungrateful children in all the universe, Jesus has come down to us. Unbelievable good he is planning for the ugly.

and he enters the world as a man so that he can suffer. He can suffer what we men and women, boys and girls, deserve. Every single day of Jesus' life he was faithful.

He always said no to sin and he always said yes to faithfulness. So that he could live a life which he could offer as a sacrifice to God and carry the weight of my sin.

He carried my sin as if it was his own. He suffered the worst possible experience, not just crucifixion, but he was forsaken by God and the anger of God was upon him because of my sin.

[19:36] And then he raised, was raised on the third day. He shows that everything has worked, that the payment has been accepted and the breakthrough has taken place. An eternity with Christ can be a reality and a gift for those who put their hope in him.

It takes about five seconds to do. The way you send up a simple prayer like the thief on the cross and you say I'd like to be yours. So can you see that the humanity of Jesus, 100% humanity makes him the perfect substitute and the 100% deity of Jesus makes him the perfect saviour.

The two halves, the son of Joseph or at least from the house of Joseph and down from heaven.

That is the solution. The question, therefore, in question 6, verse 42, isn't this Jesus who was born and bred in Joseph's house gets the answer yes.

And the question is how can he say that he came down from heaven gets the answer because it's true. How can he say he came down from heaven because he did.

and he came down from heaven for people like you and me. And the whole plan of God which began in his heart to gather a people for himself must finish in your heart.

[20 : 59] It's no good is it just saying Jesus came into the world. He must, by his Holy Spirit, come into your heart. You must take the bread of life and it enter you.

Because unless he enters you, it hasn't gone from heart to heart. It's just gone from heart to head. It has to go from heart to heart.

Is this Jesus, the son of Joseph whose father and mother we know? Yes. How can he say he came down from heaven? Because he came down for men and women and boys and girls like you.

Let's pray together. Amen.