

KENMORE BAPTIST CHURCH MESSAGE OUTLINE, 12<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2010 (LOGOS)  
WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES THIS BABY MAKE?

**“Unto Us a Child is Born.” So What?**

*What impact can the birth of one baby have?* More than an unusual miracle, the virgin birth of God-in-the-flesh (literally, *incarnation*) is the beginning of a Kingdom—a new order and a new way of doing things. This Kingdom is here now, but like a seed growing into a tree, it is still coming.

In Isaiah 9:6-7 it says “Unto us a child is born, to us a son is given.” It goes on to say his Kingdom will establish *justice* and *righteousness* from that time on and forever. That is what the heart of today’s message is about. The biggest difference Jesus’ birth made is that it ushered in a Kingdom of justice and righteousness.

Still: *So what?* Christmas may be about the “light of the world” entering human history; but 2,000 years on, the world still looks pretty dark: slave trafficking, HIV/AIDS, no food and poor water. Where is his Kingdom’s *justice* on these fronts? What difference does this baby make to *our* most pressing problems *today*?

As this message will explore, Jesus’ birth has set the trajectory toward ultimate justice and freedom. It signalled heaven literally coming to earth. The challenge this Christmas is to enter in and participate with Christ’s Kingdom—to be points of intersect and interlock between heaven and earth. Our actions in the present are all expressions of God’s Kingdom, now, but also forever. And it’s all part of the difference Jesus’ birth made and the difference God wants our births to make.

**SLAVE TRAFFICKING ... The Difference this Baby Makes**

Modern day slavery takes many shapes. It includes trafficking of women and children for sex, bonded labour, involuntary servitude, debt bondage, sex tourism, and child soldiers to name just a few of its manifestations. It’s multifaceted and multinational: there are between 12.3 million and 27 million children, women and men in slavery around the world. This industry captures 32 billion dollars in profit.

Each number is a face, with a story. Born as a Jew on soil occupied by the Roman Empire, Jesus was no stranger to stories of slavery. Yet his birth struck the freedom bell, which has reverberated throughout history and releases slaves even today.

Jesus’ birth brought into world consciousness the sacred dignity and rights of every human being. The moral war on slavery is won: almost everyone labels it an evil, especially in the wake of Christian slave-abolitionist William Wilberforce, who spent 51 years banning slavery across the British Empire. And this work keeps expanding:

 **Zach Hunter:** a teenage freedom fighter

 **Danny Smith:** exposing injustice, establishing shelters, extending love

🚩 **Father Shay:** cowboy rescues, *Preda*, and the Peace Prize

🚩 **Anti-Slavery International:** countless activists and initiatives since 1839, like International Justice Mission ([www.ijm.org](http://www.ijm.org))

As an aid worker in the Sudan noted on Christmas day, Jesus' birth wasn't simply commemorated by wise men and shepherds. King Herod 'celebrated' with genocide, ordering the murder of all infant boys in Bethlehem. It reminds us that Jesus' birth was a bright light of hope piercing the darkness, being born into a world of injustice.

*So, be inspired by what the birth of this one baby has begun!* If you can hear God's heart beat for justice and his quiet whisper to get involved, then get informed by checking out [www.zealouslove.org](http://www.zealouslove.org), and ask how God would have you act.<sup>1</sup>

But what about *your* slavery? The deepest captivity is bondage to doing what only brings death—rejecting God, hurting others, and damaging his planet: this is *sin*. Jesus came to set all people free from slavery to sin, if we acknowledge our chains and ask for forgiveness (Luke 4:18-19; Romans 6:6). Are you free? Have you shared this freedom with those you love this Christmas? Jesus' birth can redeem us all.

## HIV/AIDS ... The Difference this Baby Makes

*Champion:* (n) "One who comes forward in defense of another or for a cause; one who supports or maintains a cause or an individual; a protector or vindicator."

Christmas is about the incarnation: God taking on flesh. God was our champion through the incarnation, saving us. In turn, we are to be champions on the same mission as Jesus: loving those without hope ... like **Faith**, an eleven year old Ugandan girl orphaned by AIDS.

HIV is transmitted through multiple means, such that many with AIDS are suffering through no fault of their own. But even for those whose sin left them vulnerable to this virus, Christ is less concerned with the cause than their healing.

HIV/AIDS is destroying whole communities, as the mums and dads, farmers, and young adults are most likely to fall victim, leaving the very young and very old to care and provide in their place. Widows and orphans abound. Approximately 10,000 people die from AIDS every day, with 46 million people infected with the virus globally. Over 500 people have died of AIDS since this talk-segment began.

In the Christmas story God comes down into our mess, to come up again and bring the whole ruined world with Him. Jesus embraced those of his day who suffered consequences and stigma much like AIDS sufferers now—lepers, prostitutes, adulterers, demoniacs, outcasts. *Every story shows the difference this baby makes:* the awesomeness of God entering the smallness, even the decay of earthly life.

---

<sup>1</sup> To dig deeper, read Mike and Danae Yankoski, *Zealous Love: A Practical Guide to Social Justice*; Alvin Schmidt and Paul Maier, *Under the Influence: How Christianity Transformed Civilization*; Chap Clark and Kara Powell, *Deep Justice in a Broken World*; and James Choung, *True Story: Christianity Worth Believing In*.

In his descent, AIDS victims can find a Saviour who understands their suffering. He moved from heaven to earth, from glory to germs, from perfect wholeness to a world of disease. Like those with HIV/AIDS, Jesus Christ was a baby with a sentence on his head—born to die. A dirty manger, a stigmatized birth, a poor family—Jesus could walk beside an AIDS victim and empathize with the sullied identity they carry.

AIDS sufferers have an outward virus of the body, but familiar to the entire human race, we have an inward virus of the soul. Sin separates us from life, from God, and brings death. In fact its only wages *are* death (Romans 3:23; 6:23). But Jesus took on our sickness and immunized us by his blood. Death is not the ultimate, Jesus is. Only Jesus has conquered death, offering hope now and life after the grave.

Immanuel—God is with us. The greatest came as a baby to serve the least. How can we follow suit? What cause will we champion? Whose skin, wound, or life can you touch that no one else will? Jesus' disciples follow this same trajectory: heaven to earth, houses to gutters, safety to danger:

✚ **Denis and Sue Wadley:** 'Bridges of Hope' to South American sufferers

✚ **The Chapman Family:** raising awareness and channelling funds

✚ **Sarah White:** nursing in Nigeria, embracing babies nobody wants

How will we champion this King and His Kingdom? May the spread of God's love through us be truly epidemic, an outbreak that began when something big entered something tiny in a little town called Bethlehem.

## **HUNGER & THIRST ... The Difference this Baby Makes**

Access to food that is safe to eat and water that is clean to drink is a third way Jesus' birth has made a difference around the world.

As Australia struggles with overeating and obesity, the developing world is starving. 1.1 billion people lack access to fresh water and 925 million people were malnourished in 2010. Poor water is to blame for 4 billion cases of diarrhoea annually, resulting in 2.2 million deaths from something entirely preventable. 9 million die from hunger and hunger related issues—that is 25,000 people every day. In combination, that is 31,000 people or the equivalent of 74 jumbo jets crashing *every day*, or one person dying *every 3 seconds*.

So, how has Jesus' birth made a difference? And how can we live in this legacy?

The birth of Jesus really did usher in a new kingdom. Not only did Jesus come to profoundly meet our spiritual needs; he demonstrated how he cared about our physical needs also. God took on flesh—born into a poor family in a dry and dusty land. God knows what it is to be hungry; to be thirsty. In terms of food and water, it's no coincidence that Jesus described himself as the bread of life, and also said,

*“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him” (John 7:37-38).*

Jesus offers holistic salvation—body and soul—eternal life that for many *begins* with good food and fresh water ... like the feeding of the 5000. On judgment day, the sheep and goats—true and false converts—will be separated on the basis of what they did, or didn’t do, in response to the poor, hungry, homeless, and imprisoned (Matthew 25:31-46). Because of this, out of love, Jesus’ followers have sought to cater for the world. Ancient history reveals essentially no organized charitable efforts for the hungry and thirsty beyond one’s own ethnic grouping prior to Christ. Yet after Christ, charity and benevolence flourished. The early Christian church had a great record of helping the needy. And this provision continues today:

-  ***Droplets In A Stream (DIAS):*** KBC effort to source water in Ugandan slums
-  ***Iris Ministries:*** digging wells in Mozambique for sick communities
-  ***Living Water International:*** persistence in Africa, water for millions
-  ***Raju and Samita:*** feeding programs and water filters in Kathmandu

When committed Christians see the world through Jesus’ eyes, they are determined to make a better life for others, physically and spiritually.

## **If You Follow *This* Baby, What Difference Will YOU Make?**

Jesus’ birth in this world to a virgin wasn’t simply an isolated and unusual miracle; it was history changing. It was the beginning of a Kingdom characterized by justice and righteousness now and forever. Jesus’ birth and life makes a difference not only to what happens when we die; it makes a massive difference to people right now. Because of Jesus we can squarely face the mess this world is in. Whether we are slaves to sin, the dejected, forgotten, or the hungry or thirsty, *Jesus was born for all of us*. He brought freedom for the captives, love and mercy for the leper, and he is the bread of life and living water to all who hunger and thirst for God’s greatest gift.

Let’s dust off the nativity scenes and see how radical it is to know, love and identify with Jesus—to be a sign of God’s Kingdom here on earth. This Christmas, how will we respond to the good news of God’s reign, coming humbly as a baby to a broken world? *What difference does God want my birth, and my life to make in this world?*

### **RESPONSIVE ACTIVITIES**

1. Read Isaiah 9:6-7 then scan a newspaper to see the state the world is in. How has Jesus’ birth made a difference? Spend time asking God how your birth could make a difference.
2. Use [www.zealouslove.org](http://www.zealouslove.org) to research needs and next steps on a world issue of choice.
3. Consider using World Vision ‘Smiles’, Christian Blind Mission’s (CBM) catalogue, or some other organizations way to give a gift this Christmas to the most needy, like Jesus’ birth.
4. Download from <http://logos.kbc.org.au/blog/resources/logos-talks/baby/> the **Small Group Guide** for this talk, with activities, questions, thought provoking leads, and full notes.