

THE SIGN OF THE SON OF MAN

David Black, Presbytery Word for week commencing Sunday 20 July 2025
Transcription of recording, slightly edited

The suffering Seed

I do love being here amongst you all. The content that we have is very rich. How many have a copy of chapter 3 in your hands, and you are scribbling all over it? I reckon it is a terrific way of letting the word rest upon us, and for us to engage with it, because there is a lot of content.

I am not sure that I am going to be able to do justice to all the elements that are part of the block that I have been asked to speak on, but I do rejoice that as we are engaging with the word, the Lord is actually speaking to our hearts, and I trust that that will be your journey. He is calling us to travail with Him so that the word that He is speaking to us would become birthed within us. I could say that that has certainly been my experience even in preparing this content. It has been a travail for which I am really thankful because that is the work that the Lord is doing. He wants to do that in all of us to make sure that the things that He is saying to us are becoming substantial within us.

I will follow on from where John was. He was looking in (at least at the beginning), at the fellowship of offering among the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and how They each laid down Their lives to one Another so that Their covenant purpose could be fulfilled. What is Their covenant purpose? What is the desire of the Father? Does someone want to say? It is two words. Many sons — that's right. They laid down Their life for this covenant purpose to be fulfilled. It begins with the Father and the Son giving the fullness of the sevenfold Spirit of God to the Holy Spirit so that He could become the Helper. Then as the Helper, the Holy Spirit enabled the Son to empty Himself of His glory, so that He could be emptied into the bosom of the Father and become the Son of the Father — the Son of God. Then the Holy Spirit (as the

Helper) enabled the Father to bring forth Yahweh Son as the Son of God.

I love the way the Scriptures have a very succinct way of expressing those things. There is a verse that we know well which says, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You.' Psa 2:7. He is speaking about the fellowship that They had in the 'before' when Yahweh Son became the Son of God, the Son of the Father. It is tremendous to keep remembering these things. In the context of what we are talking about today, and in the chapter I am picking up from the block that is headed up 'The suffering Seed', it is helpful to remember that the fruit of that offering of Yahweh (the Holy Spirit, the Son and the Father all offering Themselves, in the 'before') was not many sons. In fact, it was just one Seed, you could say. The fruit of all that offering was a single Seed, Christ, who is the substance of all sonship. Their desire is in view, but it is not yet fulfilled.

The one Seed, Christ contained the potential for a great multitude of sons; but there was just one — one Seed. Every person who would ever be born had been individually considered and known and named in Their fellowship, but the potential for the realisation of those names was manifest and contained in that one Seed. I am sure everyone was resonating with John [Hall], thinking the scary thing could have been that if Vic had not met Lorraine, he [John] could have been somebody else. There was the potential for all that. It was contained in just one Seed. The question that is asked in the book is this one simple question: 'How did the one Seed of the Father become a multitude of sons according to the purpose that They had?' When I first read that I thought that that is an easy question to answer. God wanted it to happen, and so of course it was going to happen.

I then began to consider it a little bit more. I want us to stop and think before we answer the question: how did the one Seed become a multitude? I want us to think about why we are asking that question. Why do we need to ask that question? I would answer that question simply this way: it is because the way in which the one Seed became a multitude was a pathway pioneered by Christ; and it was a pathway that we must join if we are to be included in the fulfillment of Their purpose. I will say it another way. The multitude is the many sons that God wants to bring forth. If the many sons are going to include me, I need to participate in that pathway. We are asking this question (How did the one Seed become many?), so that we know how to respond, because that provision that God made, was not an inevitability. It is not inevitable that because Christ pioneered a pathway, everyone that He did that for will participate. It is not an inevitability; but it is an invitation. It is an invitation to you today to say, 'Lord you have pioneered a pathway so that I can become a son of the Father.'

Some of these things can sound very familiar to us, but I have been encouraged by the word that we heard recently that to have these things proclaimed to us again is safe for us. We are hearing the word proclaimed to us time and again as a safeguard, so that the things that the Lord wants to establish in us would actually be firmly and unshakably established in us. As we receive this gospel and it becomes the substance and the culture of our life, as we are dealing with and putting off all our carnal defaults, as that is happening in our homes, we are being established. We are being built into the foundation of the heavenly city. Coming back to the question: how did the one Seed Christ (the one Seed of the Father in whom all the fullness of sonship resided), how did that one Seed become a multitude?

As we have been reading in the book, we need to begin considering the answer to this in John chapter 12. This is where the answer begins to unfold for us. This is where Jesus said, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.' Joh 12:23-24.

When Jesus said that, He knew He was about to embark on His offering journey to the cross and it was through that means that He would be glorified. It was through that means that He would become the first Man in mortality who would be made in the image and likeness of God. He also knew that this process would require Him to be made sin, and for Him to lay His life down to a complete end. He is talking to His disciples and engaging them in this - the answer to this question: how is the one Seed (how am I, Christ, who is the full expression of all sonship), how am I going to become a multitude of seeds? He is engaging with His disciples, and He says to them, 'The hour has come, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone. There will only ever be one Son, one Seed, if I do not die — if I do not embark on this pathway. But if I do, there will be much fruit.' He is speaking to His disciples this way.

I am sure that the disciples did not understand the statement that He was making at the time, but by the day of Pentecost, Peter had been clearly illuminated regarding Christ's journey that resulted in the multiplication of the Seed. When he preached on the day of Pentecost (as we have been reading), he declared that God the Father raised Christ from the dead by loosing the pains of death (or the birth pangs of death). When Peter is saying that God loosed the pains (the birth pangs of death), he had come to see that the wounding events that Christ endured (the ones that he witnessed firsthand), each one of them was a birth pang.

It was a travail which was bringing something to birth and what it was bringing to birth was an immortal, incorruptible body of flesh in which the will of God was done to the glory of God. You would say what it was bringing forth was man in the image and likeness of God. When Peter is preaching, he is talking about the travail that Christ went through to bring this to birth. He had been illuminated to see that.

I think what he was illuminated to see, when he was witnessing first-hand the wounding events, was that each one of the wounds that Christ endured was sufficient in and of itself to kill Him. It is as if He went through seven death experiences. At each wound, Christ was emptying Himself to an endpoint; He was dying. He was not progressively being eaten away. At each event, He was laying His life down to an endpoint. It is helpful for us to take a little time to think about this in relation to each of the wounds.

The first point where He laid down His life was in the garden of Gethsemane. Before I say that, we will go back to John chapter 10 where Jesus says, 'Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.' Joh 10:17-18. Jesus was describing the journey that He was about to go on. He is saying, 'I have power to lay My life down in Gethsemane, and then I have power to take it again so that I might lay it down again when I go to the court of Caiaphas.' Let us take a little time to think about that.

The garden of Gethsemane is the first point where He laid down His life and it was to an absolute endpoint. As He submitted Himself to the Father who crushed Him and put Him to grief, the Father was dealing with all mankind's wilfulness and their complete alienation from Him as their Father. He was doing that so that the will of God could be

fulfilled in Christ and in everyone who joined Christ on His offering journey.

Christ was able to endure that crushing under the hand of the Father because He was strengthened by the power of Eternal Spirit. I love the way Isaiah describes this to us. He describes Christ's travail in the garden so clearly. This is Isaiah 53 verse 10. He speaks about how this wound was the initiative of the Father. It was not at the hands of wicked men. This wound was at the initiative of the Father. But Isaiah also describes the fruit that comes from this offering. We know this verse well — Isaiah 53 verse 10: 'Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When you make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed [Christ shall see His seed]. He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.'

It pleased the Lord God the Father to bruise Christ to deal with all the wilfulness and the disobedience in mankind so that the will of God could be done in a son. When you make His soul an offering for sin, what is going to happen? He is going to bring forth seed — a multitude of seed. This is the beginning process of the seed being multiplied. In this travailing and birthing experience in the garden where He was sustained by the Spirit, Christ was dealing with my disobedience and with yours — with your incapacity to do the will of God. I am sure we have all wrestled around that point where we know what we ought to do, but we find it impossible. Christ was bruised by the Father to put an end to that so that we could actually become (not reluctantly obedient) but obedient from the heart. That is the fruit of the travail that He was enduring in the garden of Gethsemane.

He laid His life down in the garden by the power of *exanastasis* (by the power of the resurrection life of God that was in His blood), which was coming out from Him like great drops of sweat. By the power of

exanastasis, He was able to take His life, having finished in the garden. Where He was bruised by God the Father, surely that would be enough to kill any mortal person, but He was sustained by that power. He had power to take His life again, not for His own sake; not to get on and do His own thing; but so He could lay it down again in the court of Caiaphas. Here He is being bruised for our iniquities so that we could be delivered from our self-righteousness; so that I could be delivered from my confidence in the validity of my own opinion. He was bruised there for my iniquity and each punch to His face, each punch to the back of His head, all these things, every blow was bringing an end to the zealous self-righteousness of every one of us. He was bringing that to an end so that we could actually come and begin to mourn and know godly sorrow.

This is a travail that was bringing an end and bringing a beginning. It was ending the self-righteousness of us all and it was bringing to birth a mourning that would result in vindication. Again, by *exanastasis* He has laid His life down, and any one of those punches could have killed Him, but He took His life again, then to be chastised for our peace, so that our immaturities could be dealt with and we could learn to love the sanctification that John was talking about before. As this was happening, He was also bringing forth the one corporate body of Christ in which all enmity and division has been dealt with. There is something being birthed; this is a travail; this is a birth pang that Christ is enduring for the multiplication of the Seed.

We could say again, from there He went by the power of *exanastasis*, took up His life again to go to Pilate to be scourged and whipped to bring healing and deliverance from all the fractures and all the frailties of humanity so that we could be brought forth as sons of God in this body of flesh - no longer hindered by the fractures, the frailties, the brokenness of humanity generally, but

we could come forth as those who are sons of God in the flesh who are able to do the will of God in the flesh. You could look at each of these wounding events until finally all these are a travail; in all these, He is laying down. 'I have power to lay My life down, and I have power to take it again, so that I can lay it down.'

Through each of these wounding events, until finally on the cross, having been fully immortalised, He laid His life down again. He emptied Himself to the Father in death so that He could be raised as the Firstfruits from the dead - a Man with an immortal incorruptible body of flesh in which the will of God was done to the glory of God. This is the fruit of His journey.

I want to say again each of these steps was a travail in which something was ending but something was being brought to birth. As He walked this way, the one Seed, Christ was dying and being raised as a Sheaf, as a Plant - a Sheaf that contains a multitude of seeds - each one with a unique name - the name of one of the multitude of sons of God who would be born again of the one life of God. This was the fruit of His travail. One Seed is becoming a multitude. By laying down His life to the end in seven wounding and travailing and birthing steps, He multiplied the life of God, so that He was no longer the one and only expression of sonship. He had now brought forth in Himself a multitude of sons of the Father. That is an amazing thing. He brought that forth at the end of His offering journey. He has brought forth a multitude of seeds, and one of those seeds has your name on it.

I want to speak for a few minutes about *how* Jesus walked that travailing journey. We know what He did on those seven wounding events, but He tells us a little bit about how He endured that journey. Straight after He spoke to His disciples about the grain of wheat falling into the earth and dying so that it could be multiplied, He then immediately

went on and said, 'Now my soul is troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But for this purpose I *came* to this hour. Father, glorify Your name.' Joh 12:27-28. Then a little after that when He is on the Mount of Olives, just before entering into the garden of Gethsemane, He again spoke about the hour of His glorification. We know these verses well in John 17. He says, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son that Your Son may glorify You: Now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.'

I find that an amazing statement. Jesus is praying to the Father that the glory that He had with the Father before the world was, in the 'before', that He would have that again; and the Father was answering Him. In the intrinsic capacity that He had as Yahweh Son to be the substance and the expression of all sonship, He is saying, 'Father, give that back to Me. I emptied it into Your bosom so that I could be born as Your son and become the one Seed. But now, Father, restore that glory to Me.'

He was not asking that for His own sake, but rather so that the name of the Father could be glorified through His offering. The way in which that happened is that the Father would be glorified as the names of all the sons of God were revealed. John has already told us this afternoon that the Father is glorified by many sons. Unless there are sons being brought forth, the Father is not being glorified. Christ brought forth the names of all the sons of God on His offering journey when He (as the substance of all sonship) fulfilled the works that belong to every name that had come forth from the Father.

Your name had been named in the 'before' and with your name, there were works associated; and for your name to come forth and to be a glory to God the Father, you have to be true to that name. How are you going to do that? You are going to do that by joining Christ because He has done that

already for you. He has walked that journey as Yahweh Son, the one who is the full expression of all sonship - including you; including your name; including all the works that are associated with your name. He has walked that journey, and in that journey, He has done all our works for us as we know from Isaiah. He was able to perform all the works that belong to our name as a son of the Father. In that way, the Lord is able then to say to each one of us (as He said of Christ), 'This is My beloved son in whom I am well pleased.' I love that thought. We read before in Isaiah, 'When You have made His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.' This is the pleasure of the Lord prospering in His hand when He says, 'This one is My beloved son in whom I take great pleasure. I am pleased as I see the name of this one fulfilled in the journey that Christ journeyed.'

I want us to pause for a moment and consider the wonder of this statement. As Christ journeyed through His seven wounding events, He was carrying in Himself your name. We have said that before but stop and think about it. Your name — *you* - nobody else in the entire world. There are another eight or nine billion people in the world, but we are just talking about *you* at the moment. Christ carried your name on that offering journey. That name about which They (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) had invested an ageless age of precious thoughts. 'How precious are Your thoughts about me,' David said. Here is the name, *your* name. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit invested an age of precious thoughts about you and that name was written into Christ the Son of God and He is carrying your name on that offering journey. He was completing all the works that are part of the glorious name that They (Father, Son and Spirit) named for you, so that *you* could be brought forth of the Father's own will as a firstfruits of His creation. I think we are so blessed. *You*

are so blessed to have that assurance being priested to you by your great High Priest. He carried your name on that journey.

As we are pausing to consider the wonder and the blessing of that, can we equally remember that He also carried the name of our brethren - all our brethren, those around you, those in your family, your parents, your children, your siblings, your spouse, everyone ? They too have the privilege of the great High Priest priesting to them the assurance that their name has been assured in His offering journey. I do pray that we can travail with Christ, that we would know how to treasure the name of each one with whom He has placed us. May we treasure our own name, but also treasure the name of those whom we have been placed with.

We have come to the point where Christ is brought forth as a Sheaf of firstfruits. One Seed has become a multitude of seeds in the head of this Sheaf of firstfruits. Then, of course, the process continues that when the Father sends the Spirit of Christ into a person's spirit, He is sending the one seed, Christ, but it is the one seed, Christ, that has a unique name written in it. When it is sent into a person's spirit to be born (or to be germinated) by the Holy Spirit, at that point that person is born again of the life of God. That is how an identity is reborn as a son of God with a unique name.

We know that very well, but we are letting the wonder of how that one seed with a unique name came into being. It came into being through Christ's journey as a Seed - one Seed that went into the ground and died through those seven travailing, birthing steps. That is how the Father is glorified. Remember Jesus said at the beginning of His journey, 'Father the hour has come, glorify Your name.' The hour has come for this process to be fulfilled. The Father is glorified as each identity is born again by the seed of the divine nature - the seed that has their unique name written in it, and having been

born, as they then grow up before Him as a tender plant, being progressively made into the image and likeness of God.

I have been pondering this. I thought what an amazing statement of what the Lord has done in all these things. I would like us to take a moment to consider this question. It is a question we have been asked a number of times before as a congregation. The question is: what hinders us? Thinking about everything that the Lord has done, what on earth would hinder us at this point? At the end of Christ's travailing journey, such a complete and glorious provision has been made for each one of us, all of which is according to the good pleasure of the Lord. What could possibly get in the road of us availing ourselves of that provision?

I could ask the question a slightly different way: what can separate us from the love of God? That is how Paul expresses that same question in Romans 8. I will read these verses from Romans 8 verse 31. He has spoken about this provision - this glorious provision that God has made for mankind - his predestination, and then he says, 'What shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?' I was taken with that thought when Paul said, 'He who did not spare His own Son...' I was immediately thinking of Christ and the Father in the garden of Gethsemane where Christ is saying, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' The Father did not spare His own Son at that point, knowing in Their fellowship together that this is the way in which the one Seed is going to be multiplied. This is the way in which the Father is going to be glorified. He who did not spare His own Son but yielded Him to that journey. As grievous as it was to the Father to yield Him to that journey of seven dying steps (which were also birthing steps), He did not hold Him back. He did not

spare His own Son but yielded Him. He who did that, how shall He not finish the job in relation to you? Surely, surely, He is going to give you freely all things. Surely, He is going to give you the full inheritance of your name - the full glory of what Christ endured for your sake as a son.

Paul goes on and says, 'Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is He who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?' Pondering this question: who can accuse you? You might say, 'Well, lots of people could accuse me if they knew all the things that I have done that are falling short of the glory that God has for me.' God is saying to you, 'Who can accuse you? Not because you have got an exemplary record, but because you have a great High Priest who has pioneered a pathway - the pathway that was named and determined by the fellowship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And every provision has been made in that journey for you to lay hold of everything. Who can accuse you? Who can condemn you? Who can separate you from that love? The answer is 'Nothing. No one.' No one can separate you from the love of God. Nothing can separate you from the love of God. Do not allow yourself to believe any other story. All that remains for you, for me, for each one of us to do is simply to journey with Him. If we journey with Him, the answer is no one can accuse us, no one can condemn us and no one can separate us from the love that He has pioneered and poured out for us.

A little earlier in Romans 8, and I will finish here. We will not quite get to 'sons of Abraham', but we might get to that another time. Earlier in Romans 8 Paul says, 'The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God and heirs of God, joint- heirs with Christ [of all the fullness

that He has in mind for us], if indeed we suffer with Him that we may also be glorified with Him.' Verses 16-17. This is the way in which this suffering Seed (this one Seed) has become a multitude and is becoming really tangibly accessible to you. Journey with Him, suffer with Him, that you might be glorified with Him as a son of God with the full inheritance that He predestined for you to have. Any other thought, any other gospel, any other rationalisation that you might have (that says none of those things is possible) is simply a lie. When Paul says, 'Who can separate us from the love of Christ?' he had a resounding answer in his spirit, 'No one can!'

The sign of the Son of Man

Our final point of focus from this month's Bible school, from chapter 3 that we have been looking at, is going to be very familiar to us. It is called 'The sign of the Son of Man' and it will be familiar because it has been the content of our daily devotions over the last week or so. We are going to look at the sign of the Son of Man. Before we do, I would like to restate what Andrew has spoken about (and John also), to revisit this question of the title of the chapter that we have been looking at: 'The manifestation of the sons of God'. I was likewise arrested by the glory of what we are looking at here. We are looking at detailed content and there are a lot of layers and there is a lot of application to our lives. The hope that is set before us is such a glorious thing. We know the verse in Romans where the phrase 'the manifestation of the sons of God' comes from. This is Romans 8 verse 19 where Paul says, 'The earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing [or the manifestation] of the sons of God.' I think that is an amazing statement. It is saying basically that the whole of creation is waiting for us to be established as those who are sons of God becoming sons of men in the image and likeness of God. That is an amazing thing, and it is not a theoretical or a theological

statement as Andrew was saying. This is a very personal statement; it is a very personal expression of the love of God for you and for me. He wants us to be manifest as His sons.

John mentioned this yesterday, but we remember the ode that Vic wrote a couple of years ago called the 'Manifestation of the sons of God' and the first line of that ode has just been resonating again in my spirit. It says, 'I can believe to see what He has already worked for me. Manifest as a son on earth through Christ revealed by me.' I find that an amazing statement. I can believe to be a part of the sign of the Son of Man, if I put it that way. We were looking at the sign of the Son of Man; we will look at that in some detail; but 'I can believe to see what He has already worked for me. I can be manifest as a son on earth.' I can be part of the sign of the Son of Man which will bring forth a great multitude into the kingdom. It will be a demonstration of His life and power, but it will be to the glory of God. This is not because of anything I have done, anything that any of us have done. It is fully His initiative.

The sign of the Son of Man is the Lord showing His desire (or His purpose) for creation. That purpose is that every identity who has ever existed would be connected to that desire that He has; that they would be connected to become a son of God being made a son of man in the image and likeness of God. That is the hope that is set before us.

Let us look at this question of the sign of the Son of Man. Our reason for considering the sign of the Son of Man is so that we would know how to respond to this sign or we would know how to allow it to direct us in our participation in the purposes of God. That might seem like a fairly obvious statement. We are studying the sign so we would know how to be directed by that sign. The Scriptures make it pretty plain that many people engage with signs in a fleshly or a carnal manner. I will read a couple of those Scriptures, but I am sure you know

those ones. Many people engage with a sign in a fleshly manner. Can we be bold enough to say to ourselves (and even to those next to us) that it would be foolish of us to think that we are better than that? We are being exhorted to take heed often and so we are taking heed in relation to this matter.

Jesus made this point very clearly when He was confronted by the Jews who wanted Him to perform some sign to prove His validity as a messenger of God. We read about this in Matthew 16. Jesus responded to the Pharisees and the Sadducees who tried to test Him by asking Him for a sign. He rebuked them for not knowing how to engage with the initiative of God as revealed in the signs of the times.

We will read this in Matthew 16 from verse 1. 'Then the Pharisees and the Sadducees came and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. And He answered and said to them, "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red;' and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah." And He left them and departed.' He is rebuking them. Can we hang around and make sure that the rebuke that was coming to them is coming to us to whatever extent we need to be rebuked in this matter?

'An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign.' To those who seek after a sign, why does Jesus refer to them as 'evil and adulterous'? I think in the first instance, the pursuit of a sign is pretty much the evidence of a desire for assurance. I have been thinking about this quite a bit, but you can perhaps join me in thinking about it. When you go looking for a sign, what are you actually looking for? For me, I know I am looking for

assurance. I am looking for assurance that is based on compelling evidence. There is something compelling that I can lean on. Things that will assure me that I am doing okay, that I am on the right track, that God is pleased with me.

Rather than being settled or assured by the word of present truth that brings faith coming from the Lord, rather than being assured there, those who are seeking after a sign are looking for a different foundation - something else that they can rely on. In Hebrews, Paul called that 'an evil heart of unbelief'. Where we are not believing by receiving the faith that is in the word that is coming to us, and when we then begin to look for something else that will give me some solid foundation that I can rest upon and be assured in, that is 'an evil heart of unbelief'.

If we look for that type of foundation rather than having the foundation of faith that comes from the word, we are vulnerable to deception. Particularly in the times of the end, those who rely on assurance from signs will, according to the Scriptures, almost certainly be deceived. We can be deceived by being persuaded by false signs. If you are looking around for signs, the Scriptures tell us that there are going to be false signs that will be persuasive. If we are looking for signs, we are vulnerable at that point to deception. I will read from Matthew 24 verse 24: 'For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive if possible even the elect.' In 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 9, Paul says, 'The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan with all power, signs and lying wonders.' There are plenty of signs out there that will deliver us not to a solid foundation that we might imagine, but to deception.

I was also struck by the potential here for us to be deceived, because we could be persuaded by those who would speak against the one sign that we should look at, which is

the sign of the Son of Man. This is Luke chapter 2 verse 34. Jesus' parents brought Him into the temple to dedicate Him, and they were met there by Simeon. Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, His mother, 'Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.'

We have false signs that will deceive us, and we have true signs that will be spoken against. It is an evil generation that seeks after a sign rather than believing, relying only upon the faith that is established in the word that is coming to us.

It is also an adulterous generation. The way Jesus describes this is it highlights the fact that those who seek after a sign refuse to join His travailing death. They refuse to join Him in that travailing death so that they might be married to Him and participate in bringing forth the fruit for God. They refuse to join Him to become part of the bride. They are adulterous because they are not willing to be washed from the filth of the flesh by the water of the word so that they can be sanctified as part of the bride of Christ.

Those who seek after a sign are unwilling to believe and unwilling to suffer. That is an evil and adulterous generation. Paul elaborates a bit on Jesus' statement that only one sign will be given to this evil and adulterous generation. Read with me in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 from verse 22. We will read a few verses here. Paul says, 'For Jews request a sign.' Jews seek after a sign. In the gospels you will see many times where it says, '...and the Jews came seeking after a sign'. Paul is commenting here observing what was clear in the gospels. 'For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the

foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.'

Let us think about ourselves. Are you a sign-seeking Jew or are you more of a wisdom-seeking Greek or are you a bit of a combination? I suspect that we are all a bit of a combination in that regard. But regardless of what we are, God has promised to us something that we can rely upon - one sign, one sign only - the cross of Christ which is an offence if you are looking for the demonstration of power, because it is weak. This is when Paul says, 'We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews.' It is a stumbling block because it is an offence to say, 'I thought God was supposed to be powerful. I thought if I was connected to Him, I could be assured; I could be confident in dominating things. The cross is entirely an offence and an affront.' It is a stumbling block if we are looking for assurance through compelling evidence. If we are looking for persuasion and argument and logic, the cross is just stupidity.

To those who are called and who have chosen to respond, whether you are being delivered from being a sign-seeking Jew or a wisdom-seeking Greek, if you are being called (and you have been), and you are responding to that call, then Christ and His offering journey with all its pain and all its humiliation and all its ugliness is the means by which you can know the leading of the Spirit and receive grace to be obedient to that way. Christ and His offering journey are the means by which we become new creation. 'Born not of the will of flesh nor of the will of man but of God', that all the glory and all the honour would be His. We read again in 1 Corinthians 1:27, 'God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and He has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things that are mighty; that no flesh would glory in His presence.' And then he says, 'He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.'

We are learning how to consider this question of the sign of the Son of Man. How do we engage with the sign that God had, the one and only sign that He has given? We have already read that when Jesus rebuked those who were part of that evil and adulterous sign-seeking generation, He told them that there is just one sign that you are going to be given and that is the sign of the prophet Jonah.

As we have been reading in our content, the sign of the prophet Jonah is the first expression of the sign of the Son of Man. The sign of the Son of Man is a progressive revelation, as we will see a bit later; but it begins here with the sign of the prophet Jonah. Only one sign is being progressively revealed, first seen in the prophet Jonah because his life became an expression (or a revelation) of the death and the burial and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We have been delighting in considering the story of Jonah again.

Jonah was sent by the Lord to proclaim judgement on the people of Nineveh on account of their exceeding wickedness. In the course of his journey (it was a bit of a tortuous journey for Jonah), but on the course of his journey, Jonah became the embodiment of the sign of the Son of Man. His three days and three nights in the belly of a great fish was clearly prophetic of Christ's own journey. He became an embodiment of the cross of Christ. Just as the Lord met the people of Nineveh with mercy on account of their response of repentance and faith at the preaching of Jonah, so the Lord will meet everyone who turns in repentance to the message of God's judgement and mercy as it is proclaimed through everyone whom He sends to preach the gospel of the kingdom.

The Lord has chosen the sign of the Son of Man (or the sign of Jonah) as the means by which His kind intention (or His covenant purposes) toward the whole of mankind

would be revealed. This sign is a multitude of sons who, despite their sin, have found forgiveness from the judgement of the Law to be delivered to the judgement and mercy of the cross that they might be conformed to the image of the Son of God. I am going to say that again. I want you to think about the prophet Jonah, how he exemplified through his journey in the fish and then the fruit of his ministry, what was being demonstrated there as to why Jesus was saying, 'There is only one sign that is going to be given to this generation, and it is this story here.'

The sign of the Son of Man is a multitude of sons of God who, despite their sin, have found forgiveness from the judgement of the Law to be delivered to the mercy and the judgement of the cross so that they might be conformed to the image of God. This is the sign that is being established.

This sign (particularly in the time of the end, at the opening of the sixth seal) will be the revelation of the true judgement and mercy of God revealed in the cross, which is going to cause all the tribes of the earth to mourn. In the time of the end, at the opening of the sixth seal, when this sign is revealed (we will read this in Matthew 24 shortly), it is going to provoke a reaction. It is going to cause all the tribes of the earth to mourn. That mourning will result either in deliverance and salvation, or it will result in distress and fear. There will be a polarising impact of this sign, as there is all the way through.

I will read from Matthew 24 verse 29 where Jesus says, 'Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His

elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.'

Before we consider the polarising impact that is described in that verse, David Baker was speaking to us and making the point very clearly that the sign of the Son of Man is *not* the Son of Man. The Son of Man is *Himself*; it is Christ. The *sign* of the Son of Man is sons of God. The *sign* of the Son of Man appearing in heaven is not when Christ is returning; it is when those who have been transformed by walking with Christ will be revealed in the unfolding of His purposes, and it will cause a great mourning on the earth - but it will also cause a great ingathering. The Lord Himself will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet. The end of the seals; the beginning of the trumpets - there is going to be this great evangelistic initiative that will gather the elect of God from the four winds of heaven - from one end of heaven to the other.

When Luke records this same statement of Jesus, He says that at that time, 'Men's hearts will fail them for fear.' This is the polarising away. He also says that this does not need to be your response. At that point, He says, 'Look up, lift up your head, your redemption is drawing near.' This is the opportunity that is coming because of the witness of the sign of the Son of Man. I will read a couple of other Scriptures. This one from Joel chapter 2 where it speaks about this same sign. We see the hope that is contained when we read here in Joel chapter 2 verse 30. He says, 'I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth; blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the remnant whom the Lord calls.'

There is this great hope from the sign of the Son of Man, but it does require a response of faith. I will read one more Scripture from the Old Testament. Zephaniah chapter 1 verse 12, speaking about the same time of the end. It says, 'It shall come to pass at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and punish the men who are settled in complacency, who say in their heart, "The Lord will not do good, nor will He do evil." ... The great day of the Lord is near; it is near and hastens quickly. The noise of that day of the Lord is bitter; there the mighty men shall cry out. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble, a day of distress...' and so he goes on.

For those 'who are settled in complacency', for those who do not believe the word that comes and calls for them to make a response, those who say, 'The Lord is not going to do it; He is not going to do good; He is not going to do evil. We do not need to worry about it', that day will be a day of great trouble and distress. We know in Revelation 6 where we read about the opening of the sixth seal and we read about that same description - earthquakes, sun becoming dark, moon becoming blood, heavens shaken. The impact at that time is that men, the great men, the kings of the earth, the mighty men, they will hide themselves for fear from the wrath of God. This is the polarising away impact of the sign of the Son of Man.

I said before that the sign of the Son of Man is a progressive revelation. It is being progressively revealed. In the first instance, it is expressed in the sign of Jonah - his three-day/three-night fellowship with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. That is where we see the Son of Man coming forth to the glory of God. It is the sign of Jonah.

Since the day of Christ, there have been sons of men being born as sons of God in mortality, living by resurrection life to the glory of God. We have seen that through the whole of history. All that is part of the

unveiling sign of the Son of Man. In the time of the end, as we have said, the sign of the Son of Man will be seen through the delivering power of the Father's *exanastasis* life. It is happening now. Andrew was describing it to us yesterday from Emerald - the delivering power of the Father's *exanastasis* life. That demonstration is going to multiply from when the Father takes His seat for judgement.

From there through to the opening of the sixth seal is when we see that great multitude of sons of God brought to birth through the ministry of 144 000 who go out to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom to every family on the earth. Here is this unfolding of the sign of the Son of Man.

We read in Revelation 12 about a great sign in heaven - a woman, the church, the virgin bride of Christ who is adorned with the glory of God ready to bring forth a manchild. The fruit of this woman's labour (the fruit of the labour of the bride of Christ) is a great multitude of sons of God who have been transformed into the image and likeness of God. Isaiah says of that company, 'This is an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.'

I want to conclude by asking a simple question. What is your response to the sign of the Son of Man? Are you part of an evil and adulterous generation? Is the sign of the Son of Man the sign of your participation with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection? Is that a stumbling block or is it stupidity - that evil, unbelieving, adulterous generation? Or are you embracing the weakness of this season in order to draw near to the Lord, that you might be delivered from your own wisdom, from your own wilfulness and learn how to abide with the Lord?

Think with me for a moment: the presence of the Lord is everlasting burnings. This is what the Scriptures tell us in Isaiah 33. It says 'The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has seized the hypocrites: who

among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?' There is this response of those who refuse to engage with the sign of the Son of Man appropriately and refuse to recognise what it is calling them to do. They are afraid. It says 'sinners, hypocrites' are afraid and all they can say is 'who could possibly abide in the presence of the Lord where He is a devouring fire and where He is everlasting burnings?' It is very similar to what they say at the end of Revelation 6. 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. The great day of His wrath has come and who is able to stand?' It is this rhetorical question from the hypocrites, from those who have refused to engage with the sign as the Lord is desiring.

He is coming to us today to invite us to respond differently so that in that day we will not be there saying, 'Who can abide in the fierceness of His anger?' We will be able to say, 'I know how to bear the indignation of the Lord.'

I have been really quickened in my spirit by this verse in Micah chapter 7 and verse 9. Micah says, 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him. I will bear His indignation until He pleads my case and executes justice for me. He will bring me forth to the light. I will see His righteousness.'

I am stirred in my spirit to say that when we are talking about the sign of the Son of Man, there is an invitation to say, 'Draw near now,' so that we would not draw back later; so that we would not be those who say 'the great day of His wrath has come and who could stand?' We will be able to say, 'We know the answer to that. It is those who have drawn near — those who have been conformed to His image.'

The Lord is calling each one of us here to be included in the sign of the Son of Man - to be numbered among the multitude of sons of

God, who, despite their sin, have found forgiveness from the judgement of the Law, to be delivered to the mercy and the judgement of the cross so that we can be conformed to the image of the Son of God.

He has predestined us for that hope. The sign of the Son of Man is a sign saying, 'That is your predestination. You can be joined to that.'

When you read through the book of Revelation and you see the demonstration and the expression of the power and the love, and the mercy of God and His judgement, bear in mind that all that is before the physical return of Christ to the earth. It is all that is being expressed through the sign of the Son of Man, through us, through those who are His sons and daughters. He has predestined us that we would be that sign and that that sign would become substantial in us so that we can do what Andrew was saying. As we pray, we are waiting to say, 'Lord, where is it that I am going to be a witness to you?' The sign of the Son of Man is becoming substantial within us so that we are able to be part of those who are able to harvest a great multitude for the Father.

I am very thankful that the Lord has been making it clear to us that there is only one sign that He has given. He has been calling me, and I think He is calling all of us very clearly, very urgently to repent of our desire for any other sign. Any other sign will only lead to deception. We can be established with great confidence in the fact that He has this sign established in the heavens. We have a participation in it. Bless the Lord.