

## Study 4. Crowned with glory and honour (Psalm 8; Hebrews 2:5-9)

The question, 'Do I have honour?' is close to the surface for us all. Everyone knows it is a glorious thing to be a human being. Some have become embittered and question this but then, the ability to become embittered shows they know there is something missing. The question is, what is it that constitutes the glory?

The world talks about everyone deserving honour and tries to create a frame of reference in which this can happen, but Scripture says our position of honour comes from being created by God to reflect him. The psalmist says we are crowned with glory and honour and that all things have been put under our feet (Ps. 8:5-6). This dominion over all things arises because we are made in God's image (Gen. 1:28). Paul can say that man is 'the image and glory of God' (1 Cor. 11:7). Nothing can secure our glory other than this revelation of who we really are. Jesus warned us about preferring the glory that fellow humans offer, above the glory that only God can give (John 5:44; 12:43).

If we do not find our true glory as persons, we suffer deeply. If we do not find glory in the people around us, we feel that something is deeply amiss. One only has to think of children looking for glory in their parents, or citizens looking for greatness in their leaders. Our lack of true glory leads to differences of opinion about substitutes, and these differences may cause wars—at home, or among nations. Then also, the pursuit of glory can drive us to extraordinary lengths. Whole industries, such as sports or fashion, and many others, may derive their major impetus from the human desire for glory.

It is a matter of some concern, then, that the Bible tells us that 'all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' (Rom. 3:23). The truth is that God is our glory: his creating us, calling us, being present to us, favouring us, pouring himself out for us and pointing us to our future, and us reflecting all that in our life. It is a tall order to top that with an alien glory! We will continue to pursue how God restores us, but will first look at what it means to be a human being made in the image of God.

We come to this discussion, not as idealists or moralists, but as those who have seen the revelation of true humanity in Jesus Christ, and also, as those whom God has recreated in true righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:24). We have promises of what we will become. All this gives us a place to stand and to see what a human being is. We have an incentive to be what we are, and our appetite whetted for the completion of what God has begun. This righteousness and holiness is not a potential or ideal but substantive, determinative and eternal, but more of that later.

In outline, we may say that the glory of being the image of God is *exercised* in being called to manage the earth, it is *expressed* by being either male or female, but that it *consists* in son-ship and deriving everything from God, especially his holiness and righteousness. We will look at these three aspects in turn.

The creature made in God's image was to *exercise* dominion over all that he had made (Gen. 1:26). The second Genesis account gives man the task of cultivating and keeping the garden in which he was placed (Gen. 2:15). The keeping or guarding must include keeping the serpent out of it of course, and when this was not done, God himself sent cherubim to guard it (Gen. 3:24). Not to take up our role of being over the creation is shameful for us.

Linked with being placed over the rest of creation is the command to not make any image or likeness of God (Ex. 20:4-6). The image has already been made—us! No other part of creation can take this place. We were created to be over the creation, not under it in the sense of

making and image of God, or instead of God, to which we then give allegiance and worth. Making images of something else in the creation has the double effect of diminishing God—who must be greater than anything he has created, and man—whose glory is to reflect all that God is.

The two creation stories in Genesis have opened up for us the glory that the Psalmist mentions. What a creature the human being is! Remarkably, even though we have fallen short of the glory intended for us, we remain God's image in the creation (Gen. 9:6; Ja. 3:9) and continue to have the role of image, to care for the whole creation.

The 'man' made in God's image was created 'male and female'. God could not be *expressed*, or represented in the creation without creating a man and a woman. This is filled out in the next chapter where, in connection with having charge of the garden, and naming all the creatures (discerning their nature and having authority over them), a helper suited to the man is required. So woman is created. This means that there can be no glory for mankind where the relationship and cooperation of man and woman is not part of the picture. It means that our loss of glory is particularly evident in our perversion of sexuality, or in our inability to share in the duties of our humanity.

Paul says that, as man is the image and glory of God, so woman is the glory of man. This is linked to God forming man from dust, but woman being formed from man. This does not indicate that she has any less glory than the man (any more than Adam having children in his image makes his children any less the image of God than himself—see Gen. 5:1-3; 9:6). Rather, it highlights the duality of the image God made of himself, and the necessity of maleness and femaleness for the glory of God to be present and active in the creation.

The core of being the image of God, that in which it *consists*, is our essential likeness to him, our moral likeness to him. This is clear from the perspective of our recreation. We have been given, or re-given, a humanity created by God in true righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:24), or having a true knowledge of our Creator (Col. 3:10).

All this is suggested in the early chapters of Genesis. Adam had a son in his own image and likeness (Ge, 5:1-3). The terms 'image' and 'likeness' are familial. God created us as sons (Luke 3:38). When, Adam and Eve acted against the command of God and lost their close familial relationship to God, they hid themselves in shame; their moral glory of their sonship was gone.

Moral glory, linked with our being charged with 'keeping' the garden of God in Genesis 2, means we are the moral guardians of creation. In fact, of course, we failed in this task and were thrust from the garden. This brings us to our Lord, and to Hebrews 2.

What we know about being a human being derives from seeing our Lord, Jesus Christ, fulfilling the role described in Psalm 8 (Heb. 2:9). He was crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death. The path to his true human glory, fulfilling the task assigned to humanity to reign in the earth, was via his sufferings. It is well pointed out, of course, that Jesus was glorified *for* his sufferings. This understanding derives from John's Gospel (12:27-28; 13:31; 17:1), and may be linked to the transfiguration (2 Pet. 1:17). All of God was revealed when Jesus took upon himself to save us from our sins.

The corollary of this is that our true humanity is to represent to others the steadfast love and faithfulness of God—nothing more than this, and nothing less. True glory is to consider one's life expendable in the interests of others. We may see such a calling as beyond us, but the imperatives in Hebrews do not tell us to emulate Jesus at this point. They tell us to be attentive to what we have heard (2:1) and to consider Jesus (3:1). It is by attention to him that we come to the true moral glory God has purposed for us. It is to this that we must now proceed