

## Human dignity and God's glory

### Introduction

We live at a time when much is said about human rights and basic human dignity. And, given the way in which these have been (and sadly continue to be) ignored and abused, such an emphasis is surely to be welcomed. Indeed, as we shall see from our study of Psalm 8, such an affirmation of the fundamental value and dignity of each person, should be something that every true believer in the God of the Bible should not only proclaim but practice in everyday life – in the way we view others, in the way we speak to and about others, in the way we treat others, especially those who are different from ourselves.

What is striking in Psalm 8, and here the Biblical view differs markedly from that of the world, is the foundation upon which such a view of human dignity is to be built. For the Psalm reminds us and in doing so it echoes the teaching of the whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, that our fundamental dignity and value as human beings derives first from the fact that we are created in the image of God and then and only then, from the fact that we have been entrusted with a God-given rule over creation. In the words of the Psalm, the God Who is the majestic Creator of all things (vss1,9), has first made us 'a little lower than God' (see NIV margin) and then crowned us with glory and honour (vs5) as rulers over the work of His hands. Our fundamental dignity derives not from our relationship to the created order, from what we do or accomplish or achieve. Our fundamental dignity derives from our relationship with God, from who we are as those who bear the image of the Majestic God! Once we grasp this fact, everything will (or at least should) change in the way we view and treat other people, not matter who they are.

But there is more to this Psalm than may at first meet the eye. For when we turn to the New Testament and its application of this Psalm, we discover that Psalm 8 also looks forward to the new creation and to the restoration of all things in the person of the True Human Being, the Lord Jesus Christ. Though we still bear God's image the truth is that we have fallen far from we were created to be. In Christ, and by His death and resurrection, we can however be made new, conformed now not only to the image of God but remade in the image of His One and Only Son.

### Read Psalm 8:1-9

### Investigate

1. What names does the psalmist use for God?

2. What do you think the significance of these names are? (hint: note the word '*our*' in verse 1)
  
3. What does the psalmist mean when he says that the LORD's name is majestic in all the earth?
  
4. What examples from creation does the psalmist use to reference the glory and the majesty of God as creator? (vss1,3,5-6)
  
5. Verse 2 assumes that in a fallen world, there will be those who refuse to recognise or acknowledge the LORD's majesty as creator. What strategy has the LORD used to silence such enemies? What point do you think that the psalmist is making?
  
6. How does the psalmist describe the great dignity that the LORD has given to human beings (vss5-8)? How does this tie in with what we read in Genesis 1&2?
  
7. What in particular amazes the psalmist about this great LORD? (vs4)

8. What does the psalmist conclude as he thinks about the God-given dignity of human beings?



**Think**

**Read Hebrews 2:1-3:2**

1. In what way does the writer apply Psalm 8 to Jesus, the Son of God?
2. In what way does this passage affirm the fallen nature of the present creation?
3. What has God the majestic creator done in order to restore humanity to their former glory?
4. What outworking will this have for creation as a whole? (*cf* Romans 8:18-21)
5. What should our response be to what God has done for us in Christ?

