***The Ox

RV81-02***

We continue studying worship in the throne Room. This is segment number 4 in Revelation 4:6-11.

**The Throne Room of God**

What we have been observing is that the apostle John is in heaven, and he is observing the throne room of the living God. In that throne room, which is, of course, the third heaven itself, he is observing certain very fascinating conditions.

**The Tabernacle**

One of the things that we have pointed out is that the thing that John is seeing actually in heaven is, in reality, the things which were portrayed in symbolic form in the tabernacle of the Jews on earth. In the wilderness tabernacle, and the whole system of worship, all of that had a prototype in what was taking place in heaven itself.

So, in Hebrews 8:5, we pointed out, that the writer says, "Who serve unto the example and shadow of the heavenly things." Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: "'For see,' says He, 'that you make all things according to the pattern shown to you in the mount.'" Moses was to be careful that, in its construction, people followed the plan that God had given him, because it was reflecting something about heaven itself, and it was to be exact.

In Hebrews 9:24, we read, "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figure of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." So, the writer of Hebrews recognizes that, when they went through their ceremonies, and they engaged in the tabernacle structure, they were actually doing a visual aid (a pictorial form) of what was taking place in heaven. The point of the writer of Hebrews is that now we don't need the pictures anymore, because Christ, as our High Priest, actually entered into the real throne room of God, which was once symbolized by the tabernacle and the work of the earthly priests.

**The Four Living Creatures**

We also pointed out that around this tabernacle, the tribes of Israel were located in encampment. There were three tribes on each side. Of course, this is part of what John is seeing portrayed in heaven. Here in the holy of holies was the very throne of God. This is where the high priest went to communicate directly with God, as God resided in the earthly spot of the mercy seat, which was above the Ark of the Covenant. So, the tribes were encamped round about. We pointed out that these tribes were each symbolized by a banner under one of the main tribes of this particular segment. We have a tradition from the Jewish rabbis who were very careful about keeping information like this, and we are told that the banner on one side was the lion. The banner on another side had the emblem of a man on it. On another side was the ox. And, on the northern side was the emblem of an eagle.

We have observed that these are the very same images that we have found portrayed in the Old Testament. We have the picture of Jeremiah's experience with the heavenly host. The throne of God from the Old Testament is surrounded, we were told, by four angels. So, looking at God's throne from the top, we would see an angel on each side. We find from the Old Testament that these angels are cherub type angels, and they are called living creatures here in Revelation.

So, they're surrounded by these four living creatures. On the face of these four living creatures is one of these particular emblems that was in the tabernacle. So, with these living creatures, we see the lion; the man; the ox; and, the eagle. When John sees God's throne, he sees these four cherub angels surrounding God's throne. The face of each of these angels, strangely enough, has these particular emblems: a lion's face; a man's face; the face of an ox; and, the face of an eagle.

The significance of these four living creatures is that they symbolize God's government over His creation. We are dealing in heaven with God's throne room. We're dealing with God's throne. We are dealing with symbols that surround God's judicial administration of His earth. The features of divine government, which are expressed by Jesus Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords in the millennium, are symbolized by these four living creatures.

**The Lion**

Interestingly enough, as we realize that Jesus Christ is the agent which expresses God's administrative control over His earth, we find that the four portraits that we have of Jesus Christ in the four gospels follow this very pattern of images (these four emblems). We have looked already at the gospel of Matthew which answers to the lion. It was in the gospel of Matthew that we have seen Jesus Christ as the Lion of the tribe of Judah; as the king of the Jews; and, as the royal lawgiver. Christians who will rule with the Lord Jesus Christ in the millennium will share this kind of authority – this sovereign royal authority over the earth with Him. God's Word reveals that Scripture is going to be completely vindicated. No greater statement could be found in the Word of God than that the Scriptures cannot be broken. The reason they cannot be broken is because the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the very living God, has made these laws (has made these principles of doctrine), and they will be executed.

So, the living creature with the Lion's face in heaven proclaims God's sovereign authority as King of Creation.

**The Ox**

The second one we want to look at is this one of the ox, in following the pattern that we see in the gospels.

**Mark**

The ox answers to the gospel of Mark. As you read the gospel of Mark, you will discover that it presents a portrait of Jesus Christ as the servant of God sent out to accomplish a specific service to mankind. Of course, as you think about the ox, the chief of the domestic animals, that is what he does. We refer to the Scripture to see how the ox is viewed in the Bible as the laborious servant – the one who does the work. In Mark 10:45, we have this particular picture of Jesus Christ presented. This whole gospel was written to present Jesus Christ as the servant of the living God, answering to the ox emblem.

Mark 10:45: "For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." This verse declares that Jesus Christ came to be the ever-active servant who gave His life for those He served. The Lord Jesus Christ, through His service, demonstrated how God the Father serves in blessing mankind.

**God**

This is an interesting picture of God himself: Our God, the sovereign, authoritative God is presented by one of these living creatures as having the quality of a servant. That seems to be very humbling. This is exactly what the writers of Scripture do. They call to our attention the fact that God Himself, particularly in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, did not think it beneath Himself to be the One who served others – the one who went out of His way to perform the service that others needed, apart from what was in it for Him; apart from whether they would thank Him; apart from whether they would appreciate it; and, apart from whether they would respond in any way, just because God led Him to perform the service.

That is the first significant thing for us to recognize from the quality of Jesus as the serving One – as the ox-like creature who labors in behalf of others. It is like the laboring ox, that performs in behalf of others, that the Lord Jesus Christ came, we are told, in Philippians 2:7-8 – to perform the service to which the Lord, His Father had led Him. Speaking about Jesus: "But He made Himself of no reputation. He took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself and became obedient until death, even the death of the cross." The point that Paul makes in the book of Philippians is that Jesus Christ performed the role of the serving One to the very point of the ultimate service of giving His life in behalf of the rest of the world. So, it became possible, for all those who were positive, to take the message of the gospel, and to go on to eternal life. That was the ultimate service that He performed.

Mark stresses the actions, therefore, of Jesus Christ more than the discourses and the parables. As you read through Mark, you discover that it is a book of deeds. It is an action story. It has little words like "straightaway," this was done. Then "directly," He did this. These words indicate movement. So, the whole book, as you read it, you suddenly become aware of the fact that this is a book of actions. It does not contain a lot of discourses. It does not contain a lot of relating of the parables that Jesus gave. It deals with His actions, because that's what a servant does. A servant does things.

The first 13 verses of the book of Mark are used to introduce Jesus Christ. That's all. When you stop and run your eye over that, that seems rather odd. It is only 13 verses that introduces Him. Here He is. He comes to this earth. He's the God-man. He's born. He has a supernatural birth. He receives the baptism of John. He goes out in the wilderness. He has a temptation. He's grown up. This is 30 years of his life within 13 verses.

**A Servant**

Then beginning at Mark 1:14, he immediately proceeds to describe the life of service. Just the way Mark approaches it points up to us the purpose of this book. Because he presents Jesus as God's servant, it's not necessary to give His genealogy. When Matthew wanted to present Him as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, he needed a genealogy. As we saw, that genealogy had to assure us that Jesus was not born through the line of Coniah, the cursed line, which happened to be in the line of descent of Joseph, his legal father. That was very important for Matthew to make it clear that Jesus did not come through the line upon which there was a curse, but He came through his mother's line, which was free of the curse. That was important in that book. But when you talk about a servant, who cares what his background is? This is not the nature of a servant. The only thing you want to know about a servant is: can you do the job, and will you apply yourself? Are you willing to perform the service?

So, the background of this Man is omitted in that respect. Mark omits much that Matthew and Luke record, but he does include the things that Matthew and Luke omit that deal with Jesus as a servant. It is in Mark that we have that preserved.

**John Mark**

John Mark himself (and that is the one who wrote this book) was a rather suitable person to write a gospel about Jesus as the servant – as the laboring one. This is the gospel which was symbolized by that living creature in heaven with the face of an ox. This was fitting, because John Mark himself had fulfilled the role of a servant, so he could relate to that. John Mark, we find in Scripture, was a servant to Barnabas; he was a servant to the apostle Paul; and, he was a servant to Peter. Acts 12:25 tells us that, as well as Acts 13:5 and 1 Peter 5:13. So, Mark was a servant to some very significant people.

John Mark also knew what it was to blow it as a servant, because the Bible tells us that, while he was acting as a servant associate of Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey, he decided that he'd had enough of this hard life of serving as a missionary associate, and he deserted the party and went home. Acts 13:13 says, "Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia, and John (that is John Mark), departing from them, returned to Jerusalem." Paul did not view this kindly. The apostle Paul is enough of a mature Christian to understand that people who are called to serve the Lord are supposed to serve the Lord, and they're not supposed to forget to serve the Lord, and are not supposed to desert their post of ministry. They're not supposed to be up one day, and down the next day.

It's obvious that, within any organization, there are some people who are the backbone. They're the ones who are always on the job, and they're the ones that make the operation run. There are other people who are in; they're out; they're in; and, they're out. They are floaters. In the church operation, the mature ones are able to hang in there. They are very steady and very substantial. They are the backbone, and they are what makes that work go and operate and exist. But there are always the people on the fringe who get excited; they get enthused; they come in; and, then they cool off. Go back and read the parable of the sower and the seed. You'll see the four types there. They're in; they're out; they're in; and, they're out. Pretty soon, those who are in positions of leadership are also led of the Lord to realize that you cannot function on the base of the "sometime Charlies" who are there or they're not there. These are the summertime soldiers who are going to desert you about the time when you are closing in on the enemy. Therefore, spiritual leadership, in the nature of the case, learns not to look to people that are not going to be dependable. These are the people who may be there, or who may not be there. When something has to go, they call upon the people that are trustworthy.

The apostle Paul was in an enterprise that the world had never seen before. He was a person from one nation going to people in a totally different nation (the foreigners), and telling them about the God who really lives, and telling them this in the face of all their confidence in the false gods that they had, which did not exist, and which had to be put into disrepute. That was tough going. Those of you who have any acquaintance with the apostle Paul's ministry know how often he suffered. He has given us that long list of suffering at one time, just to bring it all together – the personal price he paid in trying to be a missionary.

Then he gets out there on the first trip, and this is all pioneer stuff. They don't know how to do missionary work. They're feeling their way. They're looking to the Lord. They're working things out, and all of a sudden, the fellow they have with them, who is to be their right hand man, that's critical in the operation, decides to go home. The servant leaves.

So, in Acts 15:36, we have the record of the consequences of this, when the time came for the second missionary journey with Paul and Barnabas: "And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, 'Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the Word of the Lord, and see how they do.'" Paul says, "We have left the trail of churches behind us on the first missionary trip. I think it's time, Barnabas, that we go back and see how these people are doing; see what's going on; see what needs to be straightened out; give them further instruction; and, set them up more solidly with a pastor-teacher – whatever they need in every local assembly. Let's go back and see what's been what's been going on." Barnabas agrees. Both of them feel that this is what the Lord wants them to do.

Verse 37 says that Barnabas: "Was determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark," because that was his nephew. John Mark was his nephew. He says, "Let's take little Johnny with us again." Then it says, "But Paul did not think it would be good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and didn't go with them to the work. Paul says, "Oh no, nothing doing. I've had my fill with that Johnny-come-lately. I don't want him on this trip again. I don't want us to be put in that position again where we're out there in the boondocks; we're a long way from home; and, we're living off the country as we go, and then we have some key personnel desert us – not again. I've learned my lesson with him." But Barnabas wasn't willing to settle for that.

Verse 39: "So, the contention was so sharp between them (Paul and Barnabas) that they departed asunder one from another. So, Barnabas took Mark, and he sailed to Cyprus. And Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended to the brethren unto the grace of God." They settled this by saying, "OK, then we're going to split." Barnabas went on his own, and he took John Mark with him, and Paul took Silas with him. And, of course, again, blessing is brought from the conflicts and the weaknesses of men, for now you had two missionary parties working out there – four people instead of just the two.

But, Mark, as he came to spiritual maturity, looked back upon that with considerable grief and regret – that he had done such a thing. He knew what it was to be a failure as a servant. Of course, we must recognize that the Bible also tells us that he did overcome that. His maturity developed to the point where the apostle Paul, when he was facing death itself says, "I want Mark to come." This is the very man about which Paul says, "I'm about ready to be executed. Get John Mark here to me in Rome." So, Mark himself is a very fitting person to be writing a gospel that portrays Jesus Christ as the servant.

**Mark's Audience**

The people to whom John Mark was particularly writing was the Roman gentile world. This is the world to whom he ministered. This is evidenced to us by the fact that when the epistles refer to John Mark, they never use his Hebrew name, "John." They always use his Roman name, "Mark." That's how he is always referred to, because he was a minister to the Roman gentile world.

Paul's missionary work, of course, had extended throughout the Roman Empire. Therefore, it had extended to many Roman Christians. The book of Acts shows us that some Roman officials were friendly to Paul's Christian message. So, a gospel was needed to present Jesus Christ to the Romans in terms of what impressed the Roman mentality. There was a certain thing that was big with the Roman mind, and that was from the fact that the Romans were achievers. They loved to produce. They were people of action, and they were people of power. That's why they built such a tremendous empire. They were achievers. Therefore, they were impressed with those who could serve and produce. Of course, the Romans served fantastically in business; in legal matters; in commerce; of course, in the military; in travel; in construction; and, certainly in government administration. The Romans were just superb achievers.

So, Mark comes along, who is ministering to people who have that kind of mentality, and he writes a gospel to present Jesus as the Mighty Worker who is serving with divine power and fulfilling His mission. There he has both the factors that were big with the Romans: somebody who is an achiever; and, somebody who has power. The Romans love production and power. Those two things went together for them. Here they were beautifully combined for them by Mark in this gospel, in presenting Jesus Christ. This Roman audience is in evidence to us from the very gospel of Mark, because Mark selects things from the life of Jesus in terms of the fact of the audience that he's speaking to.

He has about as half as many Old Testament quotations and allusions as do Matthew and Luke, because references to the Old Testament would not be important to the Roman gentiles. The Roman recipients require Mark to give the meaning of certain Aramaic words which are used in Mark. This is a little peculiarity. When Mark uses an Aramaic word, which is a related language to the Hebrew, he stops and explains it. Matthew doesn't do that because Matthew was writing to Jews. They're going to know what this means. But Mark is writing to these gentile Romans.

So, you have many places like Mark 3:17; Mark 3:14; Mark 7:34; Mark 9:43; Mark 10:46; Mark 14:36; Mark 15:22; and, Mark 15:34. All of these are places where he uses a foreign word (an Aramaic word), and he stops and explains what it means. In Mark 7:2ff, he, for the same reason, explains certain Jewish customs. When Matthew was referring to these customs, Matthew wouldn't have stopped to explain them, because the Jews would know them. But because of Mark's audience, he has to explain these customs. We also see from Mark 13:35 that he uses the Roman way of telling time. That was a significant clue. When you read somebody like Matthew, he uses the Jewish way of telling time, but Mark, because he's speaking to Romans, uses their way of telling time.

In Mark 13:3, he explains where the Mount of Olives is. You wouldn't have to explain where the Mount of Olives is to a Jew. He knows that it's outside the city of Jerusalem; across the Kidron Valley; and, there it is. But to the Romans that he's writing to, he had to explain where that was.

Mark does not mention Jewish Law, because that wouldn't be significant to the Romans. He explains in Mark 7:11, the meaning of the word "Corban," which the Pharisees were using in order to escape taking care of their elderly parents. He observes certain ceremonies, which he explains, like the fact that in Mark 7:3, the Jews did not eat without going through the ceremony of washing their hands. He explains when the Passover is killed in Mark 14:12, and He explains when the preparation day for the Passover is held in Mark 15:42. In Mark 1:5, he explains that the Jordan is a river.

So, all of these things, obviously, indicate to us that he's talking to people who have a totally different frame of reference than those of Jewish background, so he has to stop and explain what all these things mean, which are very significant, and that he has to refer to, because they are all associated with presenting Jesus Christ in His role as the servant.

Mark shows that Jesus Christ revealed His true identity as a servant of the living God by His deeds. For example, the passage in Mark 8:1-26 is just a series of identifying Jesus as the servant of the living God by describing the services which Jesus performed. He feeds the 4,000; He explains the symbol of the leaven; and, He heals the blind man.

Then, in Mark 8:27, Jesus brings up the issue with His disciples of how people perceive Him. Jesus says, "Now, after all of these works of service which I perform, how do people view Me?" So, verse 27 says, "And Jesus went out, and His disciples, into the town of Caesarea Philippi. On the way, He asked His disciples, saying to them, 'What do men say that I am?' And they answered, 'John the Baptist. But some say Elijah, and others one of the prophets.'" So, one of the first things that Jesus gets as the answer is that: "You are viewed as just another emissary of God, like John the Baptist, or like Elijah. You are viewed as just another man who is an emissary of God. That's what your works have conveyed to them:"

"Then Jesus said unto His disciples, 'Who do you say that I am? (Where have you come out? What have My services conveyed to you?)' Peter answered and said unto Him, 'You are the Christ.'" So, Jesus sees that, to the disciples, He is the Christ; the Messiah; the one sent to die for the sins of the world. So verse 30 says that: "He charged them that they should tell no man of Him."

Then, in verse 31, we're told that: "He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things; be rejected by the elders and by the chief priest and scribes; be killed; and, after three days, be raised again." Jesus gave this evidence to the public in general, and most of them said, "Well, He's just another good man (a rabbi), the same mistaken notion which has come down through the Jewish mentality to this day." Jesus then turned to His disciples and said, "Now I'm not going to deal with that general public anymore. I'm going to start teaching you people. I'm going to start zeroing in on you, and I'm going to clarify to you now what my greatest service is going to be: the service of death in behalf of the sins of the world."

So, to the disciples, Jesus was the Anointed One. Mark hereby shows His legitimate claim to the service as the Anointed One. Because Mark presents Jesus to the Roman gentiles as God's servant, he also gives prominence to the miracles of Jesus. You would expect that Mark would really zero in on miracles, and he records 18 of them. These miracles, while they demonstrate Jesus as a servant, also present Him as the One who has divine power. He has power over nature; over demons; over death; over disease; and, over matter. The Lord's service makes it clear that He is not only indeed the Messiah (the human Messiah), but He is also the divine God.

One thing that Mark points out, that is a point of significance relative to the service of Jesus Christ, is in Mark 6:1-6. And that is that here is the capacity principle that negative volition is the primary thing that keeps people from getting what God has for them. Negative volition is the primary thing that keeps people from receiving the tremendous blessing that God has for them: "And He went out from there, and came into His own country. His disciples followed Him. And when the Sabbath day was come, He began to teach in the synagogue. Many hearing Him were astonished, saying, 'From where has this man received these things? And what wisdom is this which He has given to Him, that even such mighty works are wrought by His hands.'"

Here in Nazareth, His hometown, people were impressed. First of all, they said, "Listen to that teaching. Now, that makes sense. That rings with truth. Furthermore, He talks as if he's got some authority from God to say that. And certainly, those miracles that He is producing confirm the fact that He does have authority to say that." So, both of these things were evident. The service of Jesus in miracles confirmed the authority with which He spoke. And the thing that bothered them is in verse 3: "Isn't this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joseph, and of Judas and of Simon, and are not His sisters here with us?" They were offended at Him. They said, "Isn't this the kid who works as a carpenter here, who used to help his father before he died? Now He has taken over the shop? We know his brothers. We know all this. We know his sisters. All of them were born through his mother, Mary. And we know his mother, Mary. Who is He to stand up here and talk to us like that? He's talking as if He represents God. He's talking as if He is superior to our rabbis."

They were offended at this. But the thing that disturbed them was that they couldn't explain how He was making blind eyes see. They couldn't explain how He was making people who were dead come back to life. All of the charismatics have learned that. That's why charismatics love to say, "I died, and then I came back to life." I'd like to go hear somebody who had died and came back to life talk, wouldn't you? But in the case of Jesus, it was really true. He was really doing these things, and they could not explain it. Do you see how terrible negative volition is? Their resistance against the Word of God was so great that it was just like when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. If you'll check that passage, you'll discover that the Bible says, "When that happened, the officials of Israel (the leaders of Israel) made the final decision that they were going to kill Him." Up to that time, they were trying to dispose of Him in one way or another, but when He raised Lazarus from the dead, the Bible says that that's when they said, "Now He has gone too far, and we are not going to compromise. This time, we're going to go after Him until we can kill him."

Verse 4: "But Jesus said unto them, 'A prophet is not without honor but in His own country, and among His own kin, and in His own house.'" Have you ever discovered that the people who think you're the dumbest are those who are members of your family that you grew up with; those who think you are the least informed; and, those who think that you couldn't possibly come to the truth about anything? Well, let this verse be a comfort to you. Jesus says that it is innately the problem of those who are closest, that they do not sense divine viewpoint when it comes through somebody that they've known all their life. Parents find it hard to think their children know something more spiritually than they do. Older people, who have not had the instruction in the Word of God, find it hard to believe that some younger person, who has been instructed in the Word of God, will know more about spiritual things than they do. But it happens to be true. If you are so foolish as to not make that distinction, you will be the loser for it.

Verse 5 tells us the terrible consequence: "And He (that is, Jesus) could there do no might works, except that He laid hands upon a few sick folks, and He healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief. And He went round about the villages teaching." That's comforting, isn't it? Here, Jesus, the servant, was putting Himself out, and hustling and humping and exhausting Himself for others, and then He sees this kind of negative volition, and the closing of capacity to receive blessing. Jesus marvels at it. That's His humanity talking. And you and I say the same thing. We shake our heads and say, "I cannot understand those people. I can't believe that people are doing that. I can't conceive of anybody that indifferent. I can't think of anybody possibly being that blinded." And in His humanity, Jesus Christ looked at them, and He said the same thing: "I can't believe the way you people are acting – your response to what I am bringing you."

He knew, as few people knew, that the services that He was bringing, as Jehovah's Servant, were a goldmine of divine viewpoint understanding. But if you don't have the capacity; if you insist on closing your mind to what God has for you; and, if you insist on being negative to the doctrines of Scripture, then you will suffer the consequences of being incapable of receiving divine blessing. A lot of people who moan about what they don't have in life, and who moan about the things that happened to them in life, are there because they do not have the capacity for God to bless them, and to make things better for them.

So, the Lord Jesus knew what it was to have His evidence rejected. He also asked for His ministry of service to be reproduced in those who followed Him. In Mark 6:7-13 is a section that describes to us how He sent out the 12, and He sent them out to do what? To serve. So, again, you have an indication that Jesus Christ is the servant as the pattern for us.

So, the living creature which John saw in heaven with the face of an ox, symbolized the servant role of God the Father through His Son, Jesus Christ. You and I, as Christians, are to reflect this divine character of service to others now, and in the millennium, and in eternity. That is exactly the pattern that will be ours.

Now: Galatians 6:9-10: "And let we Christians not be weary in well-doing (service), for in due season, we shall reap if we don't faint. As we have, therefore, opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." There you have Christian service in the present. That's what we are called to. When that living angel, with the face of the ox, stood there before God's throne and John saw him, John undoubtedly thought back in his mind of Jesus Christ in His serving capacity. He thought of himself in the years of service that he himself had invested as the result of the Lord's leading. Don't get tired in Christian service. In time, you will reap reward if you do not faint; if you don't get tired; and, if you don't fall by the wayside.

Therefore, do it where you have opportunity. Again, that's a qualifying condition. Some people you can't serve. Some people are so adamantly hardened and so negative that they will not let the Word of God say to them what it has to say to them. No matter how you would serve them with the gospel, or how you would serve them with the full counsel of the Word of God, they will not take it. But as you have opportunity, let us do divine good to everybody, but especially to those who are your fellow Christians – especially to those who are of the household of faith.

**Governments**

Perhaps one of the things that this living creature cherub angel should remind us is that we get kind of sloppy as Christians when it comes to our consideration for serving others. We have a government which is discovering what has happened to it when it has assumed a role that the Bible forbids government to have. Our government has assumed the role of being the one who serves the needs of people. It is the one who is entering into seeking to meet human physical needs and other needs that people have. But the Bible says that governments were designed by God, and restricted by God to function in a certain way. If you try to take them out of that category, they will not function. God has designed functions of government to be the umpire; to preserve freedom for everybody to function under the principles of the Word of God; and, to fulfill personal life calling. The government can never be the one who distributes benefits. The government can never be the one who serves. That's what the idea of socialism is. It's a human viewpoint concept of service. We live in a socialist mentality nation. What are we finding? We're finding that it's not working, and now it is collapsing. So, no matter what, it can no longer be done.

I read an article recently that said: who will do the service? These things need to be done for people – who will do them now? Now that government has discovered that it has destroyed the economic life of the people, and that it has destroyed the national power of this nation, who is going to do it as government is forced out of these roles? But one of the answers is: Christians, on a personal basis, and on a corporate basis. There needs to be more systematic thought. There needs to be more organized efforts such that when people need money because of legitimate circumstances of disaster that come upon them, they have a source that they can go to, that they know is going to care for them – a source which is legitimately qualified to do it: either you and I as individual believers; or, as an organization that makes provision for that. Therefore, people have the assistance they need; they have the food they need; they have the shelter they need; they have the clothing they need; and, they have the education they need. They have the personal associations, and they have the personal companionship. They have all that is involved in Christian fellowship really. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who went about meeting these needs Himself in a variety of ways because He was the Ox, and He was the laborious servant who plodded along doing the job.

You and I can get inspired. We come through and we say, "Yes, I'm going to do it," and some situation inspires us. Somebody has to have a big disaster. That's how we work. We love crises and disasters. Here's somebody that's just had the roof blown off his house; his car turned over; and, his wife came home drunk. Now this fellow needs a lot of help. So, we bring all of our things. We bring the canned goods; the sheets; and, the clothes: "Here's an extra baseball bat I don't need, and here's a softball glove," and we pour it in, and that's it. And we forget it. But that isn't the way God's servant meets the needs of people. These things go up and down. The first thing I guess that needs to be made clear is that we have to make it clear to people that we're available. You should make it clear that: "Do you need some help? Let me know. I'll see what I can do." That's all: "Do you need help? Let me know. I'll see what I can do." You'll be surprised how people then will come to you.

**The Welfare Program**

And you make the decision: Is this a loafer? Is this some sloppy character? Is this somebody who's living in a dream world? This is the problem with the welfare program. The welfare program is plagued by the guy who drove around a baby-blue Cadillac, and now his circumstances have collapsed on his head. Business has gone back. He's lost it all. He goes to the welfare program, and he's indignant at them because they won't supply him with the means to sustain his baby-blue Cadillac. It never occurred to him that he's got to get rid of that; that he's got to come down; that he has to live on a lower level; and, that he must reduce himself to his circumstances, until, in the providence of God, he can move forward again. And because government has been involved in trying to be servant to the needs of people, the government takes the attitude: "Sure, what you've always had, you should have. And as a matter of fact, if this guy over here has it, then you should have it over here.

I read of Jim Jones advising one of his associates, who was a graduate of Wheaton College, who was deeply involved with him in that socialist Marxist human-aid program under the guise of being a church. As this young man began to have serious doubts and second thoughts and questions about what they were doing, and how they were handling this, Jim Jones said to him, "Do you see that tree over there with all that fruit?" This was in Southern California where they had a lot of fruit. So, they had this tree here with all this fruit on it. He said, "Nobody should be able to eat of that tree until everybody is able to eat of it. Cut it down." This is the mentality of the welfare program. If everybody can't have it equally, then nobody should have it.

That was not the method of meeting human needs that Jesus, the laborious serving Ox, used. His method, and the one that we are to follow, in taking our cue from this living creature with the face of an ox, is that we should not get tired in divine good production – doing good things for people. When God's time is right, which will be the Judgment Seat of Christ, you will reap, and you will be rewarded if you do not faint along the way – if you don't drop out. And that's the problem: to be a drop out in well-doing, As we have, therefore, opportunity, let us do good to people, especially to those of the household of faith.

Furthermore, we are going to continue with this doing in Acts 16:17. We are to follow in the characteristics of the apostle Paul. Here's a tremendous thing to have people say about you: "The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, 'These men are the servants of the most High God, who show to us the way of salvation.'" Now that is an honored title. We hear of Silas and Paul being beaten, and suffering. But people knew who they were. They said, "These men are the servants of the most High God who show unto us the way of salvation." That is the greatest service that you can perform – the service, not only of physical needs that people have, but their primary service is that of meeting their need for spiritual things.

It is true that people have a hard time listening to their spiritual needs when they have material needs. When I was a high school kid, I used to go down to the great rescue mission in Chicago called the Pacific Garden Mission. I would take my trombone, and sit upon the platform, playing with the music. And into this place would come all the derelicts and bums from Michigan Avenue and State Street. It was Skid Row. All of these guys would shuffle in there. I knew, from the fact of knowing the background of some of these people, that these were not just ignoramuses. These were men who had families; men who had been high in business; and, men who had been executives. But they hit the booze, and now they were on Skid Row. They were coming in off the cold winds of Lake Michigan to get something to eat. And here these people are hungry and cold.

So, they used to have the principle there that they had soup before salvation. So, if you're going to have these people sit and listen to the gospel, they need to have a human need met so that they can concentrate on the gospel. The result was that after the soup was served, a lot of them indeed were saved – some of them with tears making little white lines on their dirty faces as they came down. They were inspired far better when they had their physical need of hunger removed, so that they could concentrate on the gospel. It is an honor to say, "Here is a servant of the most high God who performs the greatest service. He tells me how I can escape and go to heaven."

Revelation 7:15: "Therefore, they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple, and He that sits upon the throne shall dwell among them." This is describing those who come out of the tribulation into the millennium. Here they are described as those who serve God day and night in His temple. The people who come out of the tribulation, who survive, or those who are martyrs who are born again during tribulation – they will come out, and they will function during the millennium as servants of the most high God. And, of course, you and I, as associated with Jesus Christ, will do the same.

However, there's one more dimension to this role that we have as servants of the most high God. In Revelation 22:3, we are looking out in eternity. We're across the other side now completely. The millennium is behind us. Eternity has begun. We're in the third heaven. We're in the paradise of God: "And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it. And His servants shall serve Him." Now that, folks, is what you're going to be doing for all eternity. In God's paradise of the third heaven, it will be an eternity of service. It would be well to learn to play the role of the laborious serving ox after the pattern of the Lord Jesus Christ now. It has enormous benefits for you and for others if we are faithful in that role, and it has enormous benefits in eternity when we stand before the Lord and we receive those rewards.

So, the gospel of Mark is a very interesting little book, in that Mark was led by the Holy Spirit to select from the life of Jesus those things that would present Him to that Roman gentile mentality that appreciated achievers and loved power, and saw Jesus Christ as the One who is God's Servant, but a Servant who is functioning with divine power. You are the servant of the most high God. Never forget for one moment that the power of the Spirit of God: going before you; preparing your way; and, enabling you, is the same power with which you serve. You, in your humanity, stand in the same position as Jesus Christ. May the banner of the ox be one to which we rally with renewed zeal and renewed dedication.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1982

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