

The Inroads of Protestantism, And, How to Lose the Kingdom in One Generation

David Bercot

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Well good morning. I'm blessed to be following Brother John's message because mine will build right into what he had to say.

We're going to be looking at how we lost the original Anabaptist teaching on salvation. I think the title in the brochure is about the inroads of Protestantism, and this is the primary inroad: How are we saved, what is salvation all about? More importantly, what is Christianity all about? So that will be what we are talking on. Because once the Anabaptists lost their original teachings on salvation, they soon lost the kingdom as well. The two go hand in hand.

The inroads of Protestantism into the Anabaptist world is not a recent phenomenon. It's not something has happened in your lifetime; it started back in the 1800s. The problem I think originates when the Anabaptists came to the new world they quit evangelizing. When they were in Switzerland the Protestant churches were afraid of them. "We've got to stop these Anabaptists, we've got to put them in jail, and we don't want them out here influencing the people around us." When they came to the New World it was just the opposite. They were afraid of the Protestants. "We'd better just keep German because otherwise we're going to be influenced by these Protestants around us." I don't know if it was the trauma of being forced out of their homeland and all they went through on the ships I really don't know but somehow when they got here the situation was reversed. Now when they couldn't shut them up in Switzerland, here no one asked them to be quiet and they just voluntarily chose to be so. And they slipped into more of a Catholic view of salvation. What I mean by that is, just get baptized, become a member of the church, and live by the church's standards, and that's all God expects of you. But that is not what the Anabaptists originally believed. Well, this led to spiritual dryness among the plain churches.

In contrast of what was happening among the Amish and Mennonites, the Protestant Evangelicals were growing rapidly. They had a lot of life and spiritual energy. So a Mennonite named John Funk decided to go to a Presbyterian revival meeting (in his day most Presbyterians were still very conservative) and he got converted there. He felt he had found true Christianity at last. He went on to work with D. L. Moody in his revivals. Yet Funk wasn't comfortable with infant baptism, swearing of oaths, and with the worldliness are in the Protestant churches. He also realized they didn't hold to non-resistance, the doctrine of the two kingdoms, the women were discarding the head covering; many women wore makeup in these Protestant Evangelical churches.

So he had an idea – what if we take Protestant Evangelicalism with all its theology particularly its doctrine of salvation, and we add to it the various truths that the Mennonites and Amish hold, like two kingdoms, non-resistance, nonconformity, head covering; things like that. Surely this would produce the very kind of church that God wanted; it would restore New Testament Christianity. We take what the Protestants have as our foundation, and we add non-resistance and that to it, then we have everything, he thought.

Well, it ended up causing the split between the Old Orders and what I call the conservative plain churches. And sadly the original Anabaptist doctrine of salvation had now been discarded by nearly everybody. Many of the Old Orders held to the original view (we're going to be looking at the original view in a minute). But like I say, for so many it had become this matter of "when you reach a certain age, you get baptized, you become a member of the church". Nothing was said about the new birth, nothing was said about a personal walk with Jesus Christ.

On the other hand the Protestant view was "you're saved by faith alone; once you are born again it is all over, you are guaranteed going to heaven; obedience plays no role". So nobody was preaching what the Anabaptists originally preached.

Chester Weaver mentioned the Garden City statement of faith that was drawn up in 1921. It says this about salvation: *"We believe that man is saved alone by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ. That is he is justified from all things on the ground of His shed blood, that through the new birth he becomes a child of God, partaker of eternal life, and blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ."* Now I wasn't sure what they meant by the finished work of Christ. So I looked it up just to see what churches were saying on that, and when they use that term what they mean is it's all finished. Once you accept Christ as your Savior, you are guaranteed heaven. Christ will still work in your life for you to grow spiritually, but as far as salvation it is finished. You are guaranteed heaven at that point. That is not an Anabaptist theology. That is not what our Anabaptist forefathers believed and it's not what the Christians in the first place believed, the historic Christian faith.

Well, did John Funk's theory work? Did it go on to become the restoration of true Christianity on earth? Well let's look at membership statistics (not that membership proves everything but it's rather disturbing). At the time of the Old Order split in the late 1800s, the Old Order made up thirty-five percent of all Amish. Sixty-five percent went with the Amish Mennonites. Now today the Old Order number about 125,000 members. Including all the children, there's probably about half a million. Now the plain Amish Mennonites at the time of the split made up sixty-five percent of all the Amish. The vast majority went with this new Protestant fusion, half Anabaptist and half Protestant.

So now if they did no better than the Old Orders – and here they're supposed to be doing better because they had found the real way – there would be a quarter million of Amish Mennonites today, if they did no better than the Old Orders, if they made no converts or anything, just followed in their footsteps. How many do you think there are? How many are there, like Beachy Amish and other plain Amish Mennonites? 14,000. There should be a quarter of a million, if the Amish Mennonites had done no better than the Old Orders, but there are only 14,000.

What's worse is that the vast majority of those 14,000, probably all of them, are more recent converts from the Old Order. They're not descendants from the Amish Mennonites back in the 1800s who went a different way from the Old Orders. No, it's the Old Orders that keep the Amish Mennonites going. Very few can trace their lineage back to that original split, or if they trace it back it would be on the Old Order side. In other words, this didn't work at all. In fact the Amish Mennonites today owe their existence to the fact that they are continually replenished by recruits from the Old Orders.

What about the Mennonites? Did they do any better than the Amish in that? Well in the split only ten percent of the Mennonites chose the Old Orders, and today there are about twenty seven thousand of these Old Order Mennonites. These would be the Groffdale, Joe Wenger, the Wisler, the Horning. About twenty seven thousand of them today – again, we're talking about members. Since there were nine times more Mennonites who went with the Protestant/Anabaptist fusion, there should be about a quarter million of us today. If we did no better than the Old Order Mennonites did, we should number a minimum of a quarter of a million. Hopefully we would be looking at a million or more of us. But how many are there in reality? Only 28,000 (if you don't count the Holdemans)! Only 28,000 conservative, plain Mennonites – when there should be a quarter of a million, minimum. With the Holdemans there's about 47,000. But where are the other 200,000?

Where did they go? The answer is – they followed Protestantism, either to the point that they are liberal today (they may still be Mennonites but they would be liberal Mennonites), or else they no longer claim to be Anabaptist they're just plain Protestant, or maybe not even Christians at all. I'm talking about Mennonite Church USA, and Mennonite Brethren, and groups like that who are no longer plain. All of these Mennonite churches are descendants of the New Testament Church John Funk thought he was creating. He thought he had found the answer – blend Protestantism with Anabaptism and you have the perfect church. It hasn't worked that way at all. And even among the Conservative Mennonites very often, again, their forefathers were Old Order Mennonites, or often Old Order Amish. None of us should be comfortable with this!

I think we've got to find some better way. I mean is this what we're going to just keep having – what is called the Anabaptist escalator, that you start off Old Order and you become Beachy and the next generation maybe Charity and then you're in the world, and then somebody else comes and it just keeps going. The Old Orders keep us going and we feel so much more spiritual and ahead of them – and they're the ones who keep us going.

It should cause us to search our hearts, our beliefs, and our history – it's been said that those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it. And normally when someone tries to come up with an answer today, the answer is inevitably that we've got to become more Protestant; we've got to go back to this thing – get everybody into the Protestant mindset and then add nonresistance and then we're going to be really spiritually alive. It has been tried over and over and over and it doesn't work. It works for maybe one generation and that's it.

As I said, we no longer hold to the original Anabaptist understanding of salvation. That's not the answer to all of our problems by any means but I think it's one of the key factors. I think it's the major reason. Because you can't marry Anabaptism with Protestantism, for they're built on two very different premises. Most conservative Anabaptist today, from my experience, hold to a Protestant view of salvation and a Protestant understanding of what Christianity is all about. So it's no wonder that they slowly become Protestants in every respect. If that's what you believe about Christianity, about salvation, well pretty soon you go the rest of the way.

The Protestant view is that we are saved by faith alone. The example John D. Martin gave about the lesbian woman – our obedience plays no role in our salvation, according to the Protestants. So if you are a lesbian and you're practicing that, as long as you were really saved at some point heaven is guaranteed, so it's not that important that you change. Why forbid divorce and remarriage if in the end it really doesn't matter? Why insist on the head covering? Why forbid certain kinds of clothing and entertainment, if the main thing God is interested in is to hear us say "I'm no good, I'm totally dependent on you for my salvation?" And that is, according to the Protestants, what makes God happy, that is what He wants to hear, whether we obey Him or not; yes He'd like if we'd obey, but that's not the key thing he's looking at.

Well we can't recover the original Anabaptist understanding of salvation if we don't even know what it is, and it's very rarely preached in our churches today. So I want to explain what our forefathers believed on that.

The original Anabaptist view of salvation begins with the principle that God does not change. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. If it's true of Jesus, it's also true of His Father. So if God doesn't change, if He's the same today as He was yesterday, what was He like yesterday? Why did God create humans in the first place? I think that's where we need to start. What was this all about? What was a life on Earth about? What was God interested in? It's because God originally wanted to have a people who loved him and voluntarily obeyed him and on whom he could pour out His love. Does that resonate with you? Actually both the Anabaptists and the reformers basically agreed on that. Yes originally God wanted to have this people who loved him and obeyed him out of their own free will as Micah says *"He has shown you, O man, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"*

But Adam and Eve didn't walk humbly with their God. They disobeyed him. So what became of God's plan now? This is where the reformers and the Anabaptist went down two different roads. They agreed on why God originally created us, and what He originally wanted. But when Adam and Eve sinned they say the results of that were two different things.

The Protestant Reformers i.e. Luther and Calvin and Zwingli, what they said was (this has been modified a little bit today by Protestants) "Satan has permanently thwarted God's original plan. God is not going to have a people who serve Him out of their own free will, and who love Him. He's no longer seeking for that because," according to them, "we humans can no longer love God or obey Him; that this is gone because of the fall." Now they said, "God is still going to redeem a certain portion of mankind, but this will not be because of anything they have done. Rather," according to the reformers, "He's already arbitrarily chosen whom He will reward with eternal life and whom He will eternally damn, and that we play no role in that." That was their original teaching. And now they say, "Yes, we can play a role in it but the only thing we can do is to believe and God does everything else. "

The Anabaptists would have said, "No, God's purposes are never thwarted. God originally wanted a people who would love and obey Him out of their own free will, and that is what He still wants, and that is what God will have." That is a huge difference from what the Protestants were teaching.

The Anabaptists didn't write a lot of theological works to prove that the reformers were wrong. Instead they largely just ignored the reformers' theology. They stuck to a simple, straightforward reading of Scripture, as John mentioned. The first generation of leaders often were educated men, but they got martyred pretty quickly, so in their early meetings they would come together and often you had farmers, cobblers, etc. They just read the Scriptures and they took them on the face of what they said as being true. They saw in the Scriptures that Jesus invited people to come and follow Him. They realize this meant that humans could accept his invitation. If He said "Follow me", you can follow Him. And he had people who did follow him. John the Baptist told his listeners to repent and to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. The Anabaptist believed in their simplicity that if he told his listeners to repent and bring forth fruit, they were capable of doing that very thing. We weren't totally depraved as a result of the fall, according to the Anabaptists.

But now don't jump ahead of me – the Anabaptist did not think we can save ourselves or that we have no need of Jesus' shed blood or no need of faith. They fully understood without God's grace none of us could be saved. But they did believe that we have the ability both to repent and to choose to follow Christ. But there is one essential step toward salvation that only God can perform – we cannot do that ourselves – and that is giving us the new birth. Yet the Anabaptists believed that even in the new birth God requires our cooperation.

And when you think of the New Birth, most people think of the Protestants. You think of the Evangelicals, you think of the Baptists and them, but originally, in Reformation times, it wasn't the Protestants who preached the new birth, it was the Anabaptists. It was our forefathers who preached the new birth. Luther and the Roman Catholics and Zwingli taught that the new birth is accomplished when an infant is baptized, and so the new birth is nothing, that was done when you were tiny baby.

The Anabaptists said, "No, the new birth is given only to those who have reached the age of accountability and who seek it through faith." They said that before we can receive the new birth we have to genuinely and thoroughly repent of our sins. This was not merely saying "I acknowledge I'm a sinner", and, "Jesus come into my heart." No, it was to get serious about sin, to truly repent and to die to it.

Second, this repentance needs to be followed by a conscious decision to die to self and surrender our lives to Jesus Christ; to love Him, follow Him, and obey Him. They believed that once we make that decision Christ gives us the new birth. We receive an inner baptism from the Holy Spirit that supplies us with the power to follow Christ, so long as we faithfully abide in Him.

We're right back to what God wanted in the beginning – people who would walk with Him faithfully. We can no longer walk with Him perfectly without sin, but we can walk with Him faithfully. We can have an obedient love-faith relationship with Jesus Christ and His Father. They taught that this inner baptism and new birth must then be followed by outward water baptism, just as Jesus commanded. That's why they were so insistent that we can't baptize infants because it has to follow the new birth. And an infant without faith cannot be born again.

Now again, as I said, they did not imagine they had obtained sinless perfection, but they did experience the power to walk obediently with Christ and to produce godly fruit. In fact the best proof of this reality is what their bitterest enemies had to say about them. I've got some quotes but we don't have time to look at them. John mentioned some this morning. All they could say was, "Well, they're hypocrites." They couldn't find anything wrong with them. But since they "knew" they were wrong, well then, they must be pretending to be so godly and there's something missing there.

One of the best illustrations of the original Anabaptists' understanding of salvation is that of the Israelites journeying to the Promised Land. You see here on the map where the Israelites started out. What was their condition in Egypt? They were slaves in bondage. That's where we start out as well. Egypt represents the world. We start out in the world, we're in bondage to sin, and we're in bondage to Satan. Can we free ourselves? No. Could the Israelites free themselves? No. There was nothing they could do; they were helpless. God had to be the one to free them. In 1 Corinthians Paul uses this as an illustration. He says, *"Moreover brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food" – I assume he's talking about manna – "and all drank the same spiritual drink" – I assume again he's talking about the water that came from the rock – "for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them and that rock was Christ".* Now notice the next part – *"But with most of them God was not well pleased; for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things became our examples to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted."* Paul goes on to mention other sins they committed. He says *"Now all these things happened to them as examples and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."* – and notice his final warning – *"Therefore let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall."*

And see that is where the Anabaptists differ from Protestants. You don't have to worry about falling if you're a Protestant because it's all over once you're born again. The Anabaptists said, "No, it's just the beginning." As we said, they were utterly unable to save themselves. Someone mightier than Pharaoh had to save them. In our natural state we are helpless as well. Mankind could not free themselves from Satan's hold on us. Satan had a hold on us ever since the Garden of Eden. And Jesus said, *How can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods?* – He's talking about Satan, and the goods are us. He was holding mankind in his grips. How can you do that unless he first binds the strongman, and then he will plunder his house. And that is what Jesus did. He bound Satan for us and he plundered Satan's house, and we're part of that plunder; Christ has pulled us away from Satan.

But the Israelites couldn't just sit back and do nothing. They first had to obey God. Even there in Egypt they had to slaughter the Passover Lamb. Remember what they did with the blood of the Passover Lamb. They had to splash it on their doorposts. And with us the only way we can be redeemed is through the blood of the Lamb, through Jesus Christ's blood that was shed on the cross, and we have to come under that blood. They had to put it on their own door post and be inside that house when the angel of the Lord struck, or their first born would have been destroyed as well. So it wasn't just a matter of sitting back and God put them on a magic carpet and conveyed them to the Promised Land. He did give them instructions to do and they had to be prepared to leave. So in order to be saved, we have to die to self. This is part of repentance and conversion. We also have to make a decision: that we're going to leave this world and follow Christ.

And that's again where Protestants and Anabaptist differ. Both would say you have to make a decision. But what is the decision that Protestants ask people to make? "Accept Jesus as your Savior." That's a decision. Well, we have to do that, but for the Anabaptists it was to make a decision, "I'm going to surrender my life to Jesus. Yes I accept his sacrifice for me, but I am going to surrender my life to him and I am making the commitment to obey Him and walk with Him obediently." So as we said the blood of the Lamb spared the Israelites and they had to put it on their door post. But it's not all over there. When the angel of the Lord struck, and it was time for them to leave Egypt, where did God lead them? He didn't take them straight to the Promised Land, and He didn't take them the most direct, obvious route, which would have been here along the coast. He took them to the Red Sea. What do you think crossing the Red Sea symbolized? Paul just told us. Baptism. So after they had put faith in the blood of the Lamb, had followed God's instructions, and had been willing to leave the world, He brought them to the Red Sea and they were baptized.

Now, under the Protestant model of today it's over then. OK you cross the Red Sea, you accepted Jesus in your heart. (They don't even baptize or it's a very optional thing there.) It's over. You're guaranteed the Promised Land. The Christian walk isn't over but as far as the results, it's all over at that point. The Anabaptists said, "No, that's the beginning of the journey." Before we get to the Promised Land we have to spend our lives in the Sinai Peninsula. That doesn't mean wandering aimlessly, but it means now God is going to test us. That's what he did to the Israelites. He tested them after he had saved them. They had been saved; there was a past aspect of salvation. They were saved from Pharaoh, from the world (represented by Egypt), they were a saved people, a new nation, just like we are. We become a new creation. But Paul and the other apostles and Jesus Christ tell us it's not over that point. We have to continue to walk obediently with Jesus Christ. Yes we are going to stumble, we are going to sin, and we will need to call upon him. He told us to pray daily, "Forgive us for our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us". So He knew, yes we will have trespasses. Now don't confuse this to mean we don't live in victory because if we're just living like the world then something is seriously wrong, if we're living in gross sin, trampling on Jesus' commandments on a daily or monthly basis.

But every day even as we grow in our spirituality and maturity we all sin, we are imperfect and God is testing us. Now hopefully the percentage of people who reach the Promised Land (Heaven) is going to be higher than the percentage of Israelites who reach the Promised Land. How many of them made it, out of a million who left? Two people. And that's a little bit sobering. As Paul said, "Let him who thinks he's standing beware lest he fall", and that should always be in front of our eyes.

So you no doubt have questions about what I've shared and I want to hear what's on your mind and heart and what needs to be clarified. And I'm going to be speaking somewhat on this same subject tomorrow night, so if we don't get your question answered this morning, please come up after the session and let me know what you would like to have explained more fully, that I can touch on then tomorrow night.

Question and Answer Time:

David Yoder: I want to ask a question. Are you preaching something different than John? John said we are saved from sin. You're saying we're still sinners. Is that right?

David Bercot: No, I didn't say that. The early Christians said there is a big difference between someone who commits sin inadvertently and a sinner. A sinner is somebody who lives in sin, who willfully sins. We should not be sinners. And I know Protestants defined sinners as anyone who commits any imperfection, and under that definition we're all sinners and see it doesn't matter since we're all "saved by grace alone" (according to Protestants). John and I believe the exact same thing; I'm quite certain on that.

John D. Martin: Brother David, it said you were going to tell us how to lose the Kingdom in one generation; could you just summarize an answer to that part of the question?

David Bercot: This is what happened. By going to Protestantism for the answers they thought, "We'll have it all." Because they weren't talking about the new birth. I mean so often in church history what I've seen is the choices are two bad choices and no matter which way you go it's going to be a bad choice. In fact that tends to be the rule rather than the exception. You look at so many church councils; both sides were wrong. Whichever way you go – this business of "it's enough to just get baptized when you reach a certain age and that makes you a member of the church and you live by the church standards; that's all that's expected of us, that there doesn't need to be a new birth, that we don't have to talk about the new birth." That's wrong. And that's what so many of the plain people were being faced with in the 1800s.

But then the other answer that John Funk gave was "You're saved by grace alone; obedience plays no role in salvation, but, live a godly life anyway." Well that lasts about one generation. And then your children start thinking, "Well, if this doesn't play any role in my salvation, and the Protestants' church services are a lot more interesting than ours, they're out making more converts than we are, and they've got far more missionaries, why am I wasting time here among the plain churches if, in the end, our obedience doesn't matter that much to God?" See, under the Protestant model, to me it pictures a God that makes no sense. God wants to populate heaven – he wants to spend eternity with people who love him, like any parent. That's why He uses the analogy of a father when He talks about Himself in Scripture. He is our Father. What does a father want? He wants children who love Him, who will obey him.

That's what God wanted from Adam and Eve. And no, Satan didn't disrupt his plan. Satan actually worked in God's; he didn't do what God wanted him to do, but he actually helped make God's job a little easier you might say because Satan creates all these tests. God does not bring evil upon us; Satan does. And God will permit Satan to do it. But as James says, you know, don't say when evil approaches that I'm being tried by God. God doesn't bring evil into our life, it's Satan. But God permits it or doesn't permit it depending on what He wants to allow. He will make sure we get tested. And He wants in heaven those who have demonstrated that their faith is real, is unshakable, and that they truly love Him.

As Jesus said, "If you love me you will keep my commandments". Now it is possible theoretically to keep His commandments and not love him, because Paul said if I have faith to be able to move mountains, if I give everything I have to the poor, or am even burned at the stake, and I don't have love, it profits me nothing. So we can go a long ways in obedience, we go a long ways on faith, without having love. Love is the big thing that God wants to see in our lives

because He wants to spend eternity there. If we don't enjoy keeping God's commandments now, Heaven is going to be miserable for us, to be up there where you're going to spend eternity obeying God. If you don't like it now you're not going to like it then. And he wants people who will enjoy being in his company.

Jubal Bear: David, My question is: What role does Christ's death and his blood play in our salvation? I think the Scriptures refer to the angel that went to Egypt as both the angel of the Lord and the Angel of Death. And so what does blood play in our salvation and who is it satisfying and does it wash away our sins in reality or does it cover them?

David Bercot: OK, some of those I'll probably have to answer tomorrow night, because they're deep questions. The first one is easy; there's no salvation without the shed blood of Jesus Christ. That's never been doubted by anybody; I mean even the Old Orders would not teach that we can be saved without the blood of Christ. I think that's a foundational understanding that all Christians have. And that is in no way minimized.

But it would be like the Israelites; back to my picture there. It would be like after they got through the Red Sea, getting in the wilderness, disobeying God in everything He tells them to do, but saying, "We were saved by the blood of that Passover lamb; God did it all. I did nothing; I owe it all to God" and then just disobey Him. Do we think that would have pleased God? Is He an egomaniac that just wants to keep hearing us say, "You did it, you did it, I did nothing". Yes it's good that we understand that we were helpless, that we could not save ourselves, that God did this as a gift to us, and that we're saved by the blood of Christ. But to think that we can just sit back and recite those things, and think that it's all God wants. That's a different God than the one in the Bible.

And the Bible says it cleanses us from sin; it never says (well correct me if I'm wrong) that it covers our sins; that we are still sinners and He paints this over with His blood. I heard when I went to an Evangelical church the preacher said, "When God looks down from heaven he doesn't see my sin. He just sees the blood of Christ. He doesn't see my sin." That is false doctrine; that is not Christianity. God does see our sin and he finds sin very offensive. As John said, we are not saved IN our sins; we're saved FROM our sins. But not perfectly – none of us are teaching Christian perfectionism. But we can grow, and live a godly obedient life to Jesus Christ and His Father.

Jubal Bear: How does the blood cleanse us? Is this something we can explain, or is it a mystery?

David Bercot: Yes, I think there are mysteries that we don't understand. Certainly the Trinity is a very difficult one. How His blood totally cleanses us – I don't think we have to understand; we have to believe that it does, and we have to see evidence that it does; it's not a figurative thing. One of the sites I read said "either we are totally saved and living a sinless life, or we're dead in our sins". Now this wasn't coming from some Holiness, this is just a Baptist site. What they mean is that we're living totally free from sin in a legal sense, that that's how God looks at us. In reality we're still just like the world but legally now God looks at us different. That's legalism; that is not the gospel that Jesus Christ preached. But exactly the mechanism how the blood cleanses us I don't understand. People can spend their lives trying to get to these fine points of theology, but the Anabaptists just took Scripture, "Hey it says to do this, it says to follow Him, and let's do it." Again, they emphasize you've got to be born again first but then just do what it says; it's not that complicated.

Brian: I just wanted you to comment quickly; one thing I've noticed in the Anabaptists in general, both conservative and more liberal, is we've gone to this thing of, we talk about homosexuality or divorce but we don't speak about the wealth that we've created. I mean we drive around in Lexus's now, and more importantly, there seems to be this idea that we need to take sides in political identity; that's our new idol, and I see a lot of that happening. Saying that one side is better than the other. "We're choosing the lesser of two evils." I see that as part of the world, but we don't seem to think it is.

David Bercot: OK I didn't plant that question but my message tomorrow is going to be dealing with wealth so I'll save the answer to that. Talking about losing the Kingdom, I think the issue of salvation is the biggest one, but it's not just that. There are a lot of other things, and I have to admit when I came into the plain world I was surprised how politically oriented we are. Now I grew up as a Jehovah's Witness and they teach the two kingdoms. And of course they've got a lot of mixed up doctrine; but I will say we were definitely apolitical, you know, and I don't remember ever hearing a couple of Jehovah's Witnesses standing around talking about politics; we truly took no interest in that. We as Anabaptists are way, way too much caught up in that. I mean, both political parties are of Satan. They're of God in the sense that God let Caesar rule this world as the lesser of the evil of chaos. But the early Christians didn't get involved in who should be the next Caesar and all the intrigues that were going on in Rome, and there were plenty of them. That was at the business of the world, the secular powers. We're focused on God's Kingdom, and yes, I think if we keep getting so pulled into politics that will cause us to lose the Kingdom as well.

Pat, Goshen IN: The Anabaptists preach that once you're married you're always married and you can't really lose that but you can lose your salvation. The Evangelicals seem to preach once saved always saved, and I got the impression you don't really believe that. And the Anabaptist seem to preach once married always married which the Evangelicals don't seem to believe, and your slide show was really giving me the picture that God created us to be His bride and that is how the New Testament describes the church. I'd like you to comment on that. Do you believe once saved always saved?

David Bercot: Obviously not.

Pat: How could you lose your salvation? It's my understanding that you can only be unmarried if you choose; you can't just sin so bad that you're not married anymore.

David Bercot: Let me ask you a question: When does the marriage feast of the Lamb take place? That's in the future. We are espoused to Christ. The marriage feast of the Lamb is at the end. We're not married now.

Pat: So once we're saved we are "betrothed" and it's not till Jesus returns that we're his bride, is that right?

David Bercot: Yes.

David Katie, Chicago: I have a very similar question. In that picture there of the journey of the Israelites from Egypt to Sinai to Canaan, you referred to Canaan land, or the Promised Land, as heaven. Now as far as I know most of the Israelites that eventually got to Canaan land did not die. They continued living, and they were victorious over the local pagan tribes. Now, if that analogy holds to soteriology, then I would think the logical conclusion would be that the journey through Sinai is a journey from justification and initial sanctification, to entire sanctification. Wouldn't that be the more logical analogy? And of course I'm not suggesting that most souls will ever attain that state while on earth, but, nevertheless, there are many scriptures that imply that that is what we must be striving toward. And why would all those scriptures be in the New Testament if it's one hundred percent unattainable?

David Bercot: Well, that would need a whole message on entire sanctification and the theology behind that. No analogy from the Old Testament is ever exactly perfect. We share this in church and people want to know, OK what did it represent that the Egyptians gave them their jewelry and all of that. But I'm not the one who made up the analogy; Paul is the one who did that. As Paul wrote, *"Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end. Now with whom was he angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who did not obey. So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief."* So they had already been saved at the Red Sea. But there was still the issue of obedience and unbelief. You notice it uses them interchangeably. If we believe in Jesus Christ, we obey Christ; if we obey Christ it is evidence that we believe in him. We will pick this up tomorrow night. And thank you for your questions. I will try to address them in tomorrow's message.