

YOU SHALL NOT BOIL A KID IN ITS MOTHER'S MILK

This strange prohibition (Exodus 23:19, 34:26; Deut. 14:21) according to the *New Bible Dictionary* probably "referred originally to a Canaanite ritual, which the inspired writer called for the complete rejection of this local practice. It was an idolatrous, polytheist Canaanite fertility ritual, with strong elements of cult magic." This says Israel was to avoid such practices because of the idolatry and magic associated with it. For example they could have very easily incorporated such a practice in their ordinance of the feast of weeks. (Perhaps this would have enticed some of the pagans to join them and thus be converted to the true and living God). In the era of the modern church there is evidence of guilt of "boiling a kid in its mother's milk" by incorporating the paganism of the world into the efforts to reach them with the gospel.

We use the word "paganism" (translated in many versions as *nations*, *Gentiles*, and *heathen*) as defined in *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* as "alien to the worship of the true God...a multitude of the same nature not worshipping the true God." This pretty well describes the worldly system in its rebellion against God. In his book *Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up*, Davis Beorcot states: "Christianity was originally a revolution that challenged the attitudes, lifestyle, and values of the ancient world. It was more than a mere set of doctrines, it was an entire way of life. And all the military, economic, and social forces of the Roman world could not stop it. But after 300 years, the revolution partially foundered. It ran aground because most professing Christians lost their obedient trust in God. They imagined they could improve Christianity through human means, by adopting the methods of the world. But they didn't improve Christianity, they gutted it. Sex and money scandals, an exploding divorce rate, drug addicted youths, and an ever growing worldliness is rampant. Today's church is fighting battles on all fronts. And we seem to be losing these battles to the relentlessly encroaching world. Perhaps the answers to our problems are not in the present, but in the past. Because there was a time when Christians were able to stand up to the world," The writers of the New Testament spoke of the world as an alternative to God. Jesus himself was completely separated from the world. He was not of the world (John. 17:14; 18:36), refused to pray for it (John 17:9), opposed its ruler (John 12:31; 14:30) and is now its judge (John 9:39; 16:7-11). If we are to fashion our churches after the church revealed in the Scripture the first thing we have to deal with is our attitude toward the world. The gospel that is being preached today is a gospel of being relevant and acceptable to the world's way of thinking. This is the aim of most of the religious world today and is becoming close to the danger of "boiling a kid in its mother's milk".

The watchword of the religious world has been "modernize"! The focus is upon the mission of the church based upon new and modern methods and managerial strength. As a result the church today lays little emphasis upon the past (after all what can we learn from the early church in the book of Acts?) and has dwelt

upon the future and renewal. The problem lies in the modern churches inability to see how these things carry within them values that are hostile to the Christian faith. James says: "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is it not the source of your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have, so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive because you ask with the wrong motives, so you may spend it on your pleasures. You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whosoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:1-4). Note the source of quarrels and conflicts: "among you". If we spent as much time and energy fighting "the good fight of faith" as we did fighting to make our church culturally accepted, the world would see a difference in the culture. James mentions their lusts, pleasures, friendship with the world and wrong motives. On top of this he points out their envious attitudes which had led to committing murder. It seems that all these things were "among them" which leads me to think this was a description of the church to which James wrote. It is also a good description of much we are seeing in the religious world today. The modern church is constantly surrendering, inch by inch, to the paganism of modern secularism, resulting in deviant religion and worldly standards. This means it is guilty not only of spiritual adultery, but, as James points out, murder. Spiritual murder by killing both the spirit and witness the church should have before the culture of the world. Perhaps the saddest note in James' writing is that they had made themselves enemies of God (ver.4). If the church becomes the enemy of God it becomes its own worst enemy.

As believers the modern church has tended to measure success by the same standard as the world. This is "boiling a kid in its mother's milk." Rather than living out the gospel before the world most Christians have patterned their lives after the world's culture. We have forgotten the words of Paul to the church in Corinth: "God has chosen the foolish things of the world and the despised that He might nullify the things that are" (I Cor. 1:27, 28). We see ourselves as more sophisticated than they, representatives of both the wisdom of our age and the wisdom of God. Far from being despised by the world we expect and often receive its praise. Paul's instruction to them was to uphold the truth of God in every domain of life; marriage, money, the spiritual gifts, attitude toward unbelievers, harmony between believers, worship and discipline.

The average church today can be compared to Israel in Isaiah's day (Isaiah chapter 1). They were said to have abandoned the Lord, despised the Holy One of Israel and had turned away from Him. Their cities had been burned with fire, their land lay desolate and strangers were devouring them yet God had to send them a prophet to tell them what was going on right before their eyes. Why did this condition exist and why were they not aware of their degenerate condition? Verses 3-15 answer this question:

they were too busy being religious. In our language they were too busy going to church. They had become as useless as a watchman's hut in a cucumber field and as a shelter in a vineyard. God looked at their multitude of sacrifices, the burnt offerings of rams, the fat of fed cattle, their appearing before Him and trampling His courts, the offerings and observances of new moons and Sabbaths, their spreading out their hands in prayer, and said "I am weary of this, it is an abomination to Me." In fact He said He hated what they were doing. They did not know or understand that they had abandoned the Lord and turned away from Him (ver.3-4); they had multiplied their sacrifices and offerings to the Lord (ver. 11); they were keeping the Sabbath, new moon and solemn assemblies (ver. 13) and spread out their hands in prayer, their rulers were rebels, companion of thieves, loved bribes and sought after rewards (salaries) (ver. 23). "Boiling a kid in its mother's milk" was a minor infraction of the law when compared to all this. They had not only incorporated heathen practices into their worship they had fully embraced heathen religion, but had continued to "trample the courts" of the temple offering their required sacrifices and prayers to God. This says that God can become weary and disgusted with all our own efforts even though we may be faithful in our church attendance and tithing.

Compare this description, which is indicative of the people in Jesus' day, with the people of the New Covenant after the ascension of Christ: The early church became the target of persecution because it "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6), threw cities into confusion, and threatened to destroy the economy (Acts 16:21; 17:6). The church in Jerusalem was disbanded by persecution and scattered throughout the Roman Empire. Yet in a few short years the church had swept across the Empire, confronted a pagan culture with the Lordship of Christ, demonstrated to the world a new and living way and made Roman emperors set up and take notice. A movement that began in a small corner of Palestine in a little more than thirty years reached Rome. At the heart of this phenomenal growth was the Word of God. William Barclay, points out six phases of the church in Acts: 1:1-6:7: tells of the church at Jerusalem and the preaching of Peter. It finishes with this summary: "*The word of God was increasing, and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem was being greatly multiplied and a large number of priests were becoming obedient to the faith.*" 6:8-9:31: describes the spread of Christianity through Palestine and the martyrdom of Stephen and ends with the summary: "*the church then through all Galilee was having peace, being built up and walking in the fear of the Lord was being multiplied.*" 9:32-12:21: this includes the conversion of Paul, the extension of the church to Antioch and the reception of Cornelius, the Gentile, into the church by Peter. Its summary is, "*And the word of God was increasing and being multiplied.*" 12:24-16:5: this tells of the extension of the church through Asia Minor and the preaching tour of Galatia. It ends, "*the churches then were being confirmed in the faith and were abounding more in number daily.*" 16:6-19:20: this relates the extension of the church to Europe and the work of Paul in great cities like Corinth and Ephesus. Its summary runs, "*So mightily was the word of God increasing and prevailing.*" 19:21-28:31: this tells of the arrival of Paul in Rome and his imprisonment there. It ends with the picture of Paul "*proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness unhindered.*" This was no "boiling a kid in its mother's milk."

In contrast today's church has turned itself upside down and crawled into bed with the world that has always been upside down. Instead of being a threat to the world's economy the church is dependent upon it to finance their massive structures and spending programs. When the apostles were with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration and the glory of God is revealed to them, Peter said "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will build three tabernacles here, one for you, and one for Moses and one for Elijah." Notice what Peter said: "It is good for us! Let us build for you..." If it is good for us, we will build for him. Religious people are always building something; a church, a movement, an organization, a building, a method. What Peter failed to realize, and it is what the modern church too fails to perceive, is that the glory is in Christ, and not in a building, a method, a meeting or a movement, and it is for him, not for us. That which is "good for us" inspires us to "build for you," but how many times have we built something "for" the Lord that really serves our own agenda? Randall Balmer in his book *Grant Us Courage* told of visiting a church which completed a building in 1989 at a cost of \$34 million dollars. Here are some random statistics about the building from, a fact sheet distributed to church docents: Gallons of paint 10,000, number of doors 1285, square feet of sheetrock 1,000,000, public telephones 87, kitchens 20, restrooms 40, and private restrooms 10." We do not say that building such as building is "boiling a kid in its mother's milk," but boasting of these riches comes dangerously close.

Is it God's will for the church to spend millions and millions, even billions of dollars on massive buildings? The modern church today is measured by its buildings and the number of people they can reach each week. This is justified by saying we must have facilities that can appeal to and draw attendance from the world. We are told that the modern generation is not interested in "church stuff," and cannot be reached unless we appeal to them on the level of their materialistic life style. So what? The world has never been interested in spiritual things and cannot understand them (I Cor. 2:14). God has ordained that the gospel, not an appeal to a life style, is the power of God to reach people of all generations. In the book of Acts "none of the rest (people of the world) dared associate with them but the people held them in high esteem" (Acts 5:13)

This is another area where we have lost the Scriptural teaching on the purpose of the church. Nowhere in Scripture is it stated that the non-Christian has any obligation to "attend church services." In fact there is no mention in Scripture of a "church service" or a "worship service." However it does mention a "service of worship" in Romans 12:2. Evangelism was to be done in the world, not in a church service. The meeting together (Gr. *ekklesia*) was a gathering of Christians and did not include those outside the fellowship. This is seen in I Corinthians 14:23, 24 where Paul shows it was unusual for an unbeliever or outsider to enter the place of worship. He states: "*If therefore the whole church should assemble together and all speaks in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say you are mad? But if all prophesy and an unbeliever or ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all; he is called into account by all.*" It would have been very unusual for an unbeliever to attend a Christian assembly in Paul's day. However, today most of the church's evangelism takes place by unbelievers being brought into the "worship services of the church." (You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk).