

What About Tattoos?

By Pastor Kelly Sensenig

It's no secret that we are living in the midst of a cultural explosion that has embraced and endorsed the displaying of tattoos on the human body. Popular sports figures, secular society as a whole, and even church members have begun to promote the wearing of tattoos on every part of their body. At a recent fair ministry, where we were handing out Gospel tracts, one could discern the drift of the times by witnessing the tattoo generation and the desire for people to identify with the cultural acceptance of tattoos. People claim that tattooing is a way to express themselves, their beliefs, and that wearing tattoos makes them feel accepted by others and also gives them a sexy and good feeling about themselves.

The issue of tattoos is not whether God can use someone who has a tattoo, but rather should Christians pursue getting tattoos? Just because something is popular does not mean it is right. We should "prove all things" (1 Thess. 5:21a) by the roots and the fruits of the thing in question and what it represents in history and society and then "hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21b). This is what we want to do in this study.

As late as the early 1900's, the tattoo was so far "out of bounds" with normal, civilized society, that the tattooed person was mainly found as an attraction in the circus shows. However, with the increase of pagan culture and worldly influence in our society the tattoo has become a culturally craved item. Even among many Christians the once-forbidden tattoo is welcomed with open arms and legs and necks and backs, etc. It's not surprising the major perpetrator of the Christian tattoo is the Christian rock music community. Rebellion breeds more rebellion! Following their Christian rock idols, thousands of Christian young people are getting "marked for Jesus" with the tattoo. Among the fastest growing trend in the tattoo industry is the Christian tattoo shops.

Some Christians argue that if they have the name *Jesus*, or some Biblical word or sign tattooed on their body, they can witness by the tattoo. However, we must remember that God is more concerned how

we are living our lives than by displaying a religious mark on our bodies. Displaying marks on our bodies or bumper stickers on our cars is not the way God really want us to witness. The Lord would rather have our witness displayed through Christian character and sharing the simple Gospel message with others rather than through Christian slogans. It is not necessary or Biblical to use any worldly thing to attract sinners. The power is not in the method but in the message (1 Cor. 2:4). Furthermore, it is the Holy Spirit who convicts and draws people to Christ (John 16:8) – not tattoos or rock songs.

When we pray and witness to others the Lord by His own drawing power will bring people to Himself (John 6:44). We don't need the aid of tattoos and rock music to win people to Christ. If we need Christian tattoos to win a tattoo generation to Christ and Christian Rock Music (CCM) to win a rock generation to Christ, then we will need Christian drunkards to win drunkards to Christ, Christian prostitutes to win prostitutes to Christ and Christian Satanists to win Satanists to Christ. This whole pragmatic argument is so absurd that it really demands no further thought.

In this study we must remember that it's not only the mark itself, but rather the sin behind getting any type of mark on your body, and the association of tattoos with demonism, which must be considered. Some tattoos are obviously Satanic as they look devilish, while others may be flowers, innocent looking names, or Christian objects. However, it's the sinful compromise with a pagan world and rebellion against God's command that makes tattooing a wrong practice for Christians.

I really believe that one of the compromises we are witnessing today is parents allowing their children to mark or tattoo their bodies. Most Christian parents can look at someone who has tattoos all over his body and know by discernment that it is not of God, but at the same time Christian parents may get a small tattoo themselves, or allow their children to have one, without thinking anything about it. Toy makers today even sell washable ink transfer kits so children can mark their bodies with designs. This may seem like a harmless game but we must remember what Satan is doing today and promoting among all age groups.

What about tattoos? Does the Bible condone or condemn the wearing of tattoos? In short, the Bible condemns the use of tattoos for some very obvious reasons.

There are seven reasons why God's people should not wear tattoos.

1. Wearing tattoos is associated with demonism.

Leviticus 19:28

“Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the Lord.”

God's people were to avoid pagan and demonic practices that characterized the Canaanites. Please note that the pagan customs of cutting the flesh and tattooing the body are linked with other devilish practices (Lev. 19:26) called “enchantment” (divination or fortunetelling) and those who “observe times” (soothsaying – foretelling the future through signs and omens – see also Deut. 18:10). It is also linked with those who contact “familiar spirits” (Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:11) which refers to the medium practice of contacting spirit guides for knowledge. Leviticus 19:28 reveals that the priests were to avoid the devilish and pagan mourning customs such as cutting one's hair in the style of pagan priests (Lev. 19:27; 21:5; Deut. 14:1) and cutting one's flesh like pagan mourners did (Lev. 19:28; 21:5; Deut. 14:1). Such associations with pagan practices would render them unholy and would profane the name of their God, making the priests unfit to present the offerings at the altar. These were practices that were inspired by demonism and which represented the world of the occult.

Justifying Tattoos

Some would-be tattoo Christians want to try and justify their tattoos by the process of elimination. They claim that getting a tattoo today is no different than cutting your hair in a different manner. In other words, they reason that God no longer cares how one cuts their hair today, and since this is true, He no longer cares if one gets a tattoo or not. This certainly is being unfair to what God is teaching in these verses.

In the first place, God does care how one keeps his hair (1 Cor. 11:14-15). A distinction among the sexes should always be maintained. Second, when a person wants to copy a hairstyle that is clearly associated with rebellion, such as long hair on men or punk rock hair styles, then he is clearly violating the principle of Bible separation (Rom. 12:2). Third, if one tries to argue that hair does not matter to God any longer then occult practices don't matter, satanic rituals of cutting the flesh don't matter, child prostitution doesn't matter, and contacting demons doesn't matter (Lev. 19:28-31).

Here's how *Matthew Henry's* and *Coffman's Commentaries* reflect on the "forbidden haircut" of Leviticus 19:27: "Those that worshipped the hosts of heaven, in honour of them, cut their hair so as that their heads might resemble the celestial globe; but, as the custom was foolish itself, so, being done with respect to their false gods, it was idolatrous" (Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Leviticus 19:27).

"Herodotus tells of the use of this type of haircut, forming what is called a tonsure, as the practice of pagan religious cults of ancient times who did so honoring one of their gods" (*Coffman Commentaries on the Old and New Testament*, Leviticus 19:27).

Leviticus 19:27 when correctly applied refers to men and women preparing themselves for occult rituals, this is not the same as someone merely getting a haircut or shaving off his beard. The truth is clearly stated. God told His people not to cut their hair in a certain manner, cut their flesh, or print marks on their bodies, since this was associated with heathen or pagan practices.

Separating From Ancient Customs

Some Christians who promote tattoos claim we no longer must separate from the ancient heathen practices of tattooing since they have lost their heathen connections. Of course, this is wishful thinking. It's very clear from the present-day emphasis on tattoos that Satan is still playing the key role in marking the flesh. The wicked and horrible tattoos that represent Satan's world of darkness clearly tell the story that the devil's kingdom of darkness is still being represented and promoted through tattoos in an unprecedented way.

In other words, the connection of tattoos with Satanism is still very real. Satan's link to tattoos cannot be denied without putting one's head in the sand.

The connection of tattoos or Halloween to Satanism and his world of darkness have not changed. Therefore, believers should separate from this darkness as children of light (Eph. 5:8). Trying to redeem sinful and pagan customs of darkness for light and God's glory is clearly forbidden in Scripture (2 Cor. 6:14). It is trying to unite two incompatible realms together and creates an incongruous relationship between darkness and light. Some will claim that no one wearing a Christian tattoo today is trying to pacify a pagan deity or promote Satanism. Therefore, they claim this verse about tattoos is not relevant to us. But this is not true. The principle of association still applies to the wearing of tattoos. I can indirectly fellowship with demons (1 Cor. 10:20 - "fellowship with devils") and become "partaker of other men's sins" (1 Thess. 5:22) without directly being involved with their sins. Wearing any kind of tattoos links me to the world of tattoos and what they represent - darkness, unrighteousness, infidels, Satan (2 Cor. 6:14-17). This is why the Bible commands me to "come out" and "touch not the unclean thing" (2 Cor. 6:17) even when I am indirectly or innocently related to these things. The principle of association applies to the wearing of tattoos.

When should a Christian separate from various practices, customs, symbols, and holidays?

- When the customs, symbols, and holidays still represent darkness (Eph. 5:11).
- When the customs, symbols, and holidays still represent paganism (Jer. 10:2).
- When the customs, symbols, and holidays still represent unrighteousness and Satanism (2 Cor. 6:14-17).
- When the customs, symbols, and holidays still promote worldly behavior (Rom. 12:2).

Heathen Practices – Cutting and Tattooing

Moving on to Leviticus 19:28 one must understand that cutting the flesh was a heathen practice, which expressed mourning for the deceased, since the Bible links this practice to mourning “for the dead” (Lev. 19:28). The Fausset and David Brown commentary makes this comment: “The practice of making deep gashes on the face and arms and legs, in time of bereavement, was universal among the heathen, and it was deemed a becoming mark of respect for the dead, as well as a sort of propitiatory offering to the deities who presided over death and the grave. The Jews learned this custom in Egypt, and though weaned from it, relapsed in a later and degenerate age into this old superstition (Is 15:2; Je 16:6; 41:5).”

Some suggest that it's only wrong to get a tattoo if it's done to mourn “for the dead.” Such an argument as this proves how men will go to great lengths to sanctify their sin and disobedience to God. If getting a tattoo is okay, if it's not connected with mourning over the death of people, then is the practice of satanic bloodletting or self mutilation and contacting demonic spirits okay, as long as it's not done in connection with the deceased? This whole argument is futile and absurd. Actually, the phrase “for the dead” is only referencing the “cuttings in your flesh.” The condemnation of “nor print any marks upon you” is not qualified by the phrase “for the dead.” Such an argument as this misses the whole thrust of what God is teaching.

God is saying that a person should not participate or associate with any pagan and demonic ceremonies that involve the underworld of darkness and demons whether these practices involve cutting the hair in a certain manner, cutting or mutilating the body, marking the body, child sacrifice, or contacting demons (Lev. 19:26-31).

Today evil videos, depraved rock music albums, wicked Internet games, and violent movies are displaying these evil pagan trends in order to destroy our youth. Satanic tattoos, skin heads, and other cultic rites are opening many of our children to demonization. The world of rock music, tattoos, and Harry Potter are all packaged together and spell the same thing - demonism and rebellion.

There was an obvious connection between cutting the flesh and marking the body. Both acts were rooted in demonic paganism. I did a Google search and found that I could purchase a CD called "Cut Your Flesh and Worship Satan." I didn't purchase one! Cutting the human flesh was always involved with Satanism and is a demonic practice. One of the oldest and most common satanic practices is cutting of the flesh which is also called blood-letting. The term "blood-letting" originates from the word "let" which means "to allow to pass, go or come." Hence "blood-letting" literally means to allow the blood to come, or pass. Throughout history the cutting of the flesh or blood-letting was a ritual performed to unleash demonic and supernatural powers. Because the "life of the flesh is in the blood" (Leviticus 17:11), the blood is highly valued in the occult as the "power source" and it's believed by releasing or letting the blood or the "power source" to flow that supernatural power is unleashed and brought into the life. Cutting of the flesh is simply an intrusion into the world of demonism and the occult.

Since God gave his own blood when He left Jesus Christ die on the cross (Acts 20:28), Satan and satanic ceremony require the shedding of human blood, as a way to mock and to counterfeit the truth about Christ's shed blood and the only way to Heaven. Since the life of the flesh is in the blood (Lev. 17:11), there is a sacred bond between the human and his god (Satan) whereby the human must offer blood as a sign of worship to Satan. The shedding of blood through the cutting of flesh has always been a sign associated with Satanism.

The *Dictionary of Cults, Sects, Religions and the Occult*, writes of the power of the blood and its connection to Satanism and the occult. "BLOOD (occult; Satanism). The vitalizing or life-giving agent used in the sacrament of the BLACK MASS. Blood is believed to provide power and life and therefore plays a central part in ritualistic sacrifices" (George A. Mather and Larry A. Nichols, *Dictionary of Cults, Sects, Religions and the Occult*, p.40). *The Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft* says of the blood-letting ritual, "Blood that is let is believed to unleash power." Of course, the cutting of the flesh along with the painting or tattooing of the body was all associated with demonism and the occult. This is why some deranged and demonized modern tattoo artists perform rituals during their tattoo procedure in order to unleash supernatural power. Some even lick the

flowing blood bubbling from the tattoo.

The Word of God in 1 Kings 18 gives a detailed example of blood-letting or cutting of the flesh by the prophets of Baal who were nothing more than Satanists attempting to unleash supernatural power and ignite the fire for their sacrifice.

1 Kings 18:25-28

“And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.”

Notice how 1 Kings 18:28 describe this devil-worshipping, self-mutilation, blood-releasing act. It says they "cut themselves after their manner." In other words this "blood-letting" was common practice among the prophets of the devil. Blood-letting was a familiar ritual among the prophets of Baal and the same is still practiced today by devil worshippers. It's also evident from other Scriptures that cutting of the flesh or blood-letting was a common practice among the pagan, wicked nations.

Leviticus 21:5

“They shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in their flesh.”

Deuteronomy 14:1

“Ye are the children of the Lord your God: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead.”

Leviticus 19:28 adds the practice of tattooing to the heathen custom of cutting: “Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the Lord.”

Cutting the flesh along with tattooing, or marking the body through some kind of branding or painting method, were satanic pagan ceremonies that were directed by demons and they are still being practiced today. The modern tattoo procedure is linked in some measure to the satanic practice of cutting a person's flesh and then displaying visible marks on the body. When getting a tattoo you are to some extent marring your flesh and marking your flesh which is a historical practice associated with the world of Satanism and demonism.

It was the custom of those who served idol gods in ancient times to cut and imprint upon themselves the mark of an idol to show that they were the servant of the pagan god. It's not that hard to understand, the tattoo was a mark of loyalty to a demon god! It has roots in the world of paganism, the occult, and demonism.

The Fausset and David Brown commentary once again remarks on Leviticus 19:28: "nor print any marks upon you—by *tattooing*, imprinting figures of flowers, leaves, stars, and other fanciful devices on various parts of their person. The impression was made sometimes by means of a hot iron, sometimes by ink or paint, as is done by the Arab females of the present day and the different castes of the Hindus. It is probable that a strong propensity to adopt such marks in honor of some idol gave occasion to the prohibition in this verse; and they were wisely forbidden, for they were signs of apostasy; and, when once made, they were insuperable obstacles to a return. (See allusions to the practice, Is 44:5; Rev 13:17; 14:1)."

One writer commented:

"Throughout history the tattoo bears the mark of paganism, demonism, Baal worship, shamanism, mysticism, heathenism, cannibalism and just about every other pagan belief known. The tattoo has NEVER been associated with Bible Believing Christians. And whenever and wherever, in history Christianity appears – tattoos disappear. The only exception -- 20th century, lukewarm, carnal, disobedient, Laodicean Christians."

One cannot overlook the fact that tattoos were linked with the satanic practice of bloodletting or cutting the flesh. The flesh was cut to

appease the gods and the body was also painted or highlighted to promote some pagan deities. Today when one gets a tattoo they are cutting their flesh and then painting it. This is what is clearly forbidden by God.

Demonism

Leviticus 19:28

“Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the Lord.”

In the context of Leviticus 19:26-31 the cutting of the flesh, printing marks on the body, child prostitution, and contacting spirits (mediums) were all associated with pagan religion, satanic ritual, and demonism. When the people would cut their flesh and tattoo or paint their bodies they were linking themselves with Satan’s agenda and the underworld of darkness. These practices were clearly condemned by God because of their occult connection.

Merrill F. Unger said:

“Occultism was renounced because it insults God’s deity and holy name (Lev. 19:31; Exod. 20:1-17). It is connected with demon-energized idolatry, as are tattooing of the flesh and prostitution.”

Since the history of cutting the flesh and tattooing were associated with demonism and the world of the occult, and since these very same things are still practiced today by devil worshippers, as they follow Satanic rituals, it stands to reason that Christians should not participate in these acts or associate with them in any way. Why? It’s because God has delivered us from the kingdom of darkness and wants us to represent the light of His holiness.

Colossians 1:13

“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.”

If we have been delivered from the darkness then why should we represent it by wearing tattoos which promote the underworld of darkness? When God condemns these actions for their association with devil worship and demonism we would be wise to follow His

clear commands to disassociate ourselves from anything that resembles these satanic and heathen rituals. Some things like Halloween, cutting the flesh, and tattooing do not change their historic meanings and still portray the world of darkness, demonism, occult, and satanic ritualism.

Mark 5:1-9

“And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.”

One writer observed:

“The morbid demonic practice of cutting oneself and blood-letting has a long and dark history in the demonic pages of satanism, demonism and the occult.”

We should all agree! Christian, how can you bury your head in the sand, when you know the history and present-day meaning behind such things as cutting the flesh and tattooing? The holiness of God demands a response from our lives today.

1 Peter 1:15

“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (living and conduct).

There’s no question that tattoos also originated from the satanic ritual of blood-letting and cutting of the flesh. This is why the two are joined together in Leviticus 19:28.

“Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the Lord.”

These customs were intertwined and they were heathen and demonic in nature. To participate with them was linking oneself with the underworld of demonism and the occult. God’s Word is clear. He does not want us to have “fellowship with devils” even in an indirect way through the wearing of tattoos (1 Cor. 10:20). We are to separate from everything that represents darkness, Satan’s kingdom, and which fits into the category of “the unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph. 5:11).

Listen to what the pro-tattoo, historians write: "Early people cut open their skin and rubbed soot into the wounds to mark themselves. They punctured their skin with the bones and teeth of animals" (Jean-Chris Miller, *The Body Art Book: A Complete, Illustrated Guide to Tattoos, Piercings, and Other Body Modifications*, p. 28).

The most extensive work ever published on tattoos was Dr. W.D. Hambly’s. Gilbert writes: "Hambly concluded that historically tattooing had originated in connection with ancient rites of scarification and bloodletting. . . Hambly concluded that historically tattooing had originated in connection with ancient rites of scarification and bloodletting which were associated with religious practices intended to put the human soul in harmony with supernatural forces and ensure continuity between this life and the next" (Gilbert, Steve, *Tattoo History: A Source Book*, p. 158).

"When Cortez and his conquistadors arrived on the coast of Mexico in 1519, they were horrified to discover that natives not only worshipped devils in the form of status and idols, but also had somehow managed to imprint indelible images of these idols on their skin. The Spaniards, who had never heard of tattooing, recognized it at once as the work of Satan" (Gilbert, Steve, *Tattoo History: A Source Book*, p. 99).

Even unbelieving Spaniards could see the devilish connection tattoos had with paganism. And yet some of today’s carnal, rebellious, and disobedient Christians don’t want to see the satanic origin and

connection that tattoos have with demonism and the world of the occult. There's no doubt that the cutting and marking of one's skin [tattooing] is connected to and associated with the satanic and demonic practice of blood-letting. The Scripture links the two practices together as well as modern-day sources who endorse tattoos.

Author Gilbert again links the tattoo to blood-letting, magic, and even gives an enlightening and frightening description of a modern day blood-letting, blood-licking, satanic, tattoo procedure. Notice, the connection to the demonic "spiritual manifestations" as he writes.

"In northwest Alaska, traditional practices of tattoo and ritually induced bleeding were often related and may have even overlapped to some extent. Around Bering Strait, shamans commonly performed bloodletting to relieve aching or inflamed parts of the body. Nelson watched a shaman 'lancing the scalp of his little girl's head, the long, thin iron point of the instrument being thrust twelve to fifteen times between the scalp and skull [which is the identical technique for tattooing] . . . It is plausible that the release of blood functioned to appease various ills and spiritual manifestations. For instance, several St. Lawrence Islanders explained to me the importance of licking the blood that was released during tattoo 'operations'" (Gilbert, Steve, *Tattoo History: A Source Book*, p. 181).

"The reasons why puncturing the skin should be regarded with some degree of awe are not far to seek, for in the first place, there is the drawing of blood, which to the savage world over is full of significance as a rejuvenating and immortalizing factor. There is in addition the opening of numerous inlets for evil to enter" (Hambly Wilfrid D. 1925).

Rolling Stone magazine gives a first-hand description of the blood-letting tattoo procedure: "Evan Seinfeld, the bassist for Biohazard, sits in the chair, offers his hand and waits for the bleeding to began. . . . The instrument whirs to life, humming across Seinfeld's hand, creating a vibrating pool of blood and ink" (*Rolling Stone*, March 28, 2002, p. 40).

"Some tattooists in the West are experimenting with ritual tattooing. This method of working incorporates doing a ritual to create a sacred

space in the area where the tattoo is positioned. Often incense is burned and the gods invited to bless the proceedings" (Michelle Delio, *Tattoo: The Exotic Art of Skin Decoration*, p. 75).

"And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them."

1 Kings 18:28

"And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones."

Mark 5:6

The modern tattoo procedure is linked in some measure to the satanic practice of blood-letting or cutting of ones flesh. Rubbing a little ink or pigment in your skin doesn't change the fact. You are cutting your flesh and marking your flesh which are signs associated with Satanism and demonism. These practices have not changed their meaning over the centuries and should be shunned by every God-fearing Christian who wants to represent the kingdom of light instead of the kingdom of darkness.

1 Corinthians 10:20

"But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils."

God's Word is clear on this matter. We should not associate or fellowship with demonism in any form or fashion. Wearing tattoos on the body is an attempt to link our lives with Satanism and the underworld of the occult. Wearing tattoos links us to Satan's world instead of God's world. The Bible says that followers of Christ should not associate or fellowship with Belial (2 Cor. 6:15).

A Tattoo of Jesus?

Christians who want to condone their tattoos will say, "But I have a tattoo of the cross, Jesus, or a Bible verse and this frees me from the satanic history of tattoos." No it does not! It's not only the mark itself, but rather the sin behind getting a mark on your body (Lev. 19:28),

and its association with demonism and Satanism (1 Cor. 10:20), which must be taken into consideration. As previously stated, some tattoos are clearly Satanic and they look devilish, while others may be flowers, innocent looking names, or Christian objects. However, pagans have historically placed marks on their bodies of flowers, trees and other objects of nature. This is because of the satanically inspired and pagan worship that was connected with these things. *A mark on your body does not have to be a skull and crossbones for it to be wrong.* It's not just the type of mark that a person wears but the sinful compromise with a pagan world and outright rebellion against God's command that makes tattooing a wrong practice for Christians. Jeremiah 10:2 certainly applies to the practice of getting any kind of tattoos on your body when it states: "Learn not the way of the heathen." No, it's not wrong to have a flower in your house, but it is wrong to wear a flower on your arm.

The truth is this. Until a few years ago, virtually everyone, including the most liberal Christian, knew the tattoo was clearly forbidden by the Word of God. Throughout history the tattoo has always been condemned by Bible Believing Christians. Always! Every historical resource ever written on tattoos clearly confirms this fact.

"Just as occurred in other cultures with tattoo traditions, when these pagan tribes were 'converted' to the Christian religion, their spiritual and cultural rites (which included tattooing, piercing and scarification) were outlawed." (Jean-Chris Miller, *The Body Art Book: A Complete, Illustrated Guide to Tattoos, Piercings, and Other Body Modifications*, p.9).

"Whenever missionaries encountered tattooing they eradicated it" (Gilbert, Steve, *Tattoo History: A Source Book*, p. 101).

"While these and other body modifications continued to be practiced underground as a way for non-Christian people to identify each other, God forbid you got caught and your mark was revealed" (Jean-Chris Miller, *The Body Art Book : A Complete, Illustrated Guide to Tattoos, Piercings, and Other Body Modifications*, p.11).

As late as the early 1900's, the tattoo was so far "out of bounds" of normal, civilized society, the tattooed was mainly found freaking

people out as an attraction in the circus "freak show." Up until a few years ago virtually every commentary and Christian would unanimously agree that the Bible openly condemns the tattoo. The Christian acceptance of a tattoo was not even considered for serious discussion among Christians. But in light of today's compromising and carnal Christianity we have Christians wanting to mold themselves (Rom. 12:2) to the likeness of heathen customs and culture. As a result, they want to mark themselves with the people of the world instead of marking themselves as a distinct people whose life and outward presentation is different than cultural customs which defy godliness, decency, and conduct which is becoming to saints (Eph. 5:3).

Light or Darkness?

What should be the Christian response to the practices of cutting the flesh and tattooing figures on the body?

Ephesians 5:11

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."

This verse needs no explanation. Christians are not to associate with anything that represents the world of darkness and Satan's kingdom. Instead of wearing tattoos they should refuse to mark themselves and encourage other Christians to follow the pathway of light instead of darkness.

Ephesians 5:8 says:

"For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light."

1 Thessalonians 5:5

"Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness."

God wants His children to represent light, holiness, and righteousness instead of sin, Satan, rebellion, and evil which is what tattoos represent and portray. Some people are so hideously covered with tattoos that their appearance looks evil. Why? It's because

tattoos are a sign of evil and wickedness which is against God. Why would any Christian want to associate themselves with the world of Satanism, demons, and pagan ritual which is the history and present-day meaning of tattooing?

Jesus said in Luke 16:8 that “the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.” I would agree with Jesus when looking around and seeing how God’s people are either blatantly or ignorantly associating themselves with Satan instead of the holiness of God.

1 Thessalonians 4:4

“That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification (holiness) and honour.”

Holiness or Hellishness?

1 Peter 1:15

“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation (living).”

Holiness is a command to be obeyed, a course to be followed, and a commitment to be kept. Wearing tattoos is not a sign of holiness. It is a sign of hellishness for it links people with Satan’s work and agenda. The simple truth is this. God wants us to be holy and not hellish! The fact that many popular tattoos represent death, hell, and Satan should lead a Christian to realize the satanic background and continued association of tattoos with demons and Satan. Care to take a wild guess what the number one tattoo is today in today’s modern, civilized, society? You guessed it. The symbol of death is the number one selling tattoo. The skull which represents death is a common tattoo worn by people today.

"Death and darkness have always been a classic tattoo theme – skulls, snakes, demons, spiders and spiderwebs are all conventional tattoo imagery. Darkside tattooing takes our fascination with mortality, death, isolation, fear and evil to new levels" (Jean-Chris Miller, *The Body Art Book: A Complete, Illustrated Guide to Tattoos, Piercings, and Other Body Modifications*, p. 56).

"Skulls imprinted on skin abound, and depictions of the Grim Reaper are commonly seen. . . These images, indelibly marked on the skin, reflect uncertainty about the future, and sublimate the pervasive fear of the unknown. Possibly, at the same time, to wear a death figure on one's body may be an invocation of whatever indefinable forces of nature and the cosmos that exist, in an attempt to protect the wearer from such a fate "(Henry Ferguson and Lynn Procter, *The Art of the Tattoo*, p. 76).

It's no coincidence that flames and fire are also common tattoo logos for they represent hell. One of the all-time favorite subjects of the tattoo is flames and fire. Any person who takes a tour of most tattoo shops will find the morbid scenes of death, demons, serpents, and hell engulfing you! Grim reapers, flaming skulls, snakes crawling through skulls, demons, Satan, pornography, and blasphemy is glorified. This is because tattooing has been historically associated with the world of Satan and demonism. Who do you think the real "master tattooist" is who is drawing these wicked tattoos?

Revelation 20:2 speaks of "the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan ..." It's interesting that snakes and dragons, which represent Satan, are some of the most popular tattoos today. Why? It's because the origin and history of tattoos are linked to the underworld of Satan and his kingdom of darkness. The tattoo artists know this to be true much like the rock artists know their music is from the devil.

A backslidden Christian received a tattoo and now regrets it. Her story is rather interesting.

"The woman doing my first tattoo (the tribal band) had to stop several times for mysterious reasons. She was visibly shaken and could not concentrate. She kept saying, "Man, I need a break." Though it wasn't for my sake, I hid the pain very well and tuned it out for the most part-but this woman could not wait to get me out of that chair. She claimed that she drank quite a bit the night before (I was getting the tattoo on a Saturday afternoon), and this seemed to be the most logical reason that she was having such a tough time. I can't help but wonder, however, if there was more to it. Even then my diminished discernment was working, and I sensed a spiritual conflict taking

place. When the woman had finished, she made a disturbing remark that will forever echo in mind, 'There ya go, you're no longer a virgin.' Of course, she spoke not of physical sexuality, but of spiritual defilement against God in the form of marking my flesh. Now I was 'one of the gang', one of the 'cool people', and one of the rebels who shakes their fist at the law of God."

2. Wearing tattoos violates the moral law of God.

The Bible condemns the wearing of tattoos since the moral laws of God always remain intact and unchanging throughout the history of God's dealings with mankind. The wearing of marks on the skin or painting the skin was associated with pagan practices and deities and for this reason God condemned it. Such practices were signs of rebellion against God. In light of this God instructed His people to disassociate with all of these heathen customs or practices. This command of wearing painted markings on the body along with the other commands of homosexuality (Lev. 19:22; 20:13), bestiality (Lev. 18:23), child prostitution for pagan religious worship (Lev. 19:29) and witchcraft and wizardry (Lev. 19:31) was part of the moral laws that God wrote to instruct the people in holy living.

Doesn't separation from *prostitution* (Lev. 19:29) and the *occult* practices (Lev. 19:31) apply to our lives today? As we have already confirmed, these very things are mentioned in the same context of separating from heathen practices. They are moral prohibitions that relate to pagan religious customs which should be avoided. The scarring, disfiguring, and placing of visible marks on the human body (heathen practices) was not appropriate, since the people were to be identified with God instead of pagan deities (Deut. 14:1-2). Participating with these pagan practices would violate the holiness of God (Lev. 11:44; 1 Pet. 1:15).

The point is this. God's *moral* and *ethical* laws never change from the Old and New Testaments and we should always separate ourselves from all pagan practices that continue to represent Satan's agenda. Certainly cutting the flesh, bodily disfigurement, wearing tattoos is still a sign of heathenism that God despises. The Bible says we are commanded to "touch not the unclean" (2 Cor. 6:17) of heathen and pagan ways. Some things are dirty because of what they represent! Never forget this.

One Christian who was trying to promote tattoos said, "Hey dude, this isn't for today. Man, that's the Old Testament. I'm under the New Testament." I might respond in this way, "Hey dude, your reasoning is flawed!" Some misinformed and misguided people argue that this command of not placing marks on the body was for only those Jews who live under the Old Testament Mosaic Law and imply that no commands written under the law are intended for Christians today. This simply is not true and is actually perverted reasoning. God speaks against certain sins in the Old Testament such as *bestiality* (sex with other animals - Leviticus 18:23), *sacrificing children* to pagan gods (Lev. 18:21), or *prostituting children* (Lev. 19:28) and does not specifically mention them in the New Testament. Does this mean that these commands do not apply to us today? Is it okay for us to practice these sins? Never!

Leviticus 18:23, "Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is confusion."

Leviticus 18:21, "And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord."

Leviticus 19:29, "Do not prostitute thy daughter, to cause her to be a whore; lest the land fall to whoredom, and the land become full of wickedness."

Is it okay to have sex with animals, sacrifice children in satanic rituals, and prostitute children since the New Testament does not directly speak against these unthinkable wicked practices? Nowhere in the New Testament are these acts forbidden. Does that mean now under the New Testament, God Almighty endorses having sex with animals, throwing babies into the fire as a human sacrifice, or using children in prostitution? Of course these things are wrong and any person who has any conscience will admit that these are terrible and vile practices. They are wrong because they are part of God's unchanging moral code or law and the New Testament teaching about grace teaches us to deny such terrible and wicked sins (Titus 2:11-12).

The point is this; living under the New Testament does not make a person lawless. This is why nine out of the Ten Commandments are given in the New Testaments as a mandate to follow. God gives many clear commands in the New Testament that we must follow that override personal choices. Separating from apostasy is one of them (2 Cor. 6:17) and refusing to fellowship and participate with the unfruitful works of darkness is another (Eph. 5:11). However, every Christian must come to understand that he should obey the unchanging moral commands of God in the context of grace living. Today we are to obey the moral commands of God through a relationship with grace instead of law. When a person lives under grace he is living under the power and outworking of a new system that frees him from bondage to the law as a way of salvation and sanctification before God.

Severed From the Law

The Bible teaches that Believers have been severed or released from following the entirety of the law as a way of *salvation* and *sanctification* before God (Rom. 3:28; Rom. 6:14) which is the way the Pharisees and Judaizers viewed the believer's relationship to the law during the days of early Christianity (Acts 15:1, 5; Gal. 1:6-7; Phil. 3:4-7). To combat this error in the early church Paul taught that the believer has been freed from living under the law as a rigid system that can produce salvation and sanctification in the Christian life. Paul taught that grace saves people (Eph. 2:8-9) and sanctifies people through a believer's union with Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:14) and the Spirit's ministry of making Christ's life real to us (Rom. 8:2).

Peter taught that a believer grows by the inworking ministry of grace (2 Pet. 3:18) and not through human reliance upon law. The message of grace is liberty from the law as a means of salvation/sanctification and God's grace replacing human effort (Phil. 2:13). Instead of living under law, or using the Mosaic Law as a governing and motivational force to live by, as the Pharisees and Judaizers taught, the New Testament writers taught that believers should live under the new administration of grace (Rom. 6:14) which means to allow the new teaching about God's grace (Titus 2:11-12) and the inward working of grace in the hearts through the presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 3:18) to guide, govern, rule, direct, lead, and motivate the New

Testament Church into holy living.

Yes, living under grace means deliverance or release from the law as a means of salvation and sanctification (spiritual growth). Of course, believers have also been released from the law dispensationally which means they no longer must live under the minute Old Testament laws that pertain to dietary regulations, farming, clothing, worship, and holy days (Matt. 23:23; Exodus 30:19-21; Lev. 5:2; 11:29-32; Numb. 6:18). The Bible teaches that such laws have been rescinded (Col. 2:16, Heb. 9:10) and that we are no longer under the outworking of the Mosaic dispensation with its strict penalties (Duet. 27:15-26).

But here is the catch! Although New Testament believers have been released from the Mosaic Law regulations as a way of salvation/sanctification and the outworking of many minuscule rules, which taught typical lessons about Christ and separation (Matt. 23:23; Exodus 30:19-21; Lev. 5:2; 11:29-32; Numb. 6:18), they are still obligated to follow the unchanging moral and ethical laws of God, not as the means of salvation and sanctification, but as moral codes that must be followed in the context of grace living.

When studying the Old Testament commands a person can easily distinguish between God's unchanging moral and ethical commands in comparison with those ceremonial commands that do not apply to us today (Col. 2:16-17). The point is this. God's moral commands never change and are never abrogated or done away with in relationship to the saint's lives and grace living. They are still to be observed through the new features of God's grace ministry as outlined in the New Testament epistles. We are no longer required to bring blood sacrifices to an altar but we are not given the freedom to offer our children as sacrifices to pagan gods. We no longer must promote the Jewish calendar of Sabbath days but this does not mean we should promote perverted sex and child prostitution.

Schooled By Grace!

The grace teaching of the New Testament still teaches us to deny the terrible and wicked practices of heathenism. It teaches us to live holy. Grace is actually a higher standard than law. It teaches us deny heathen ways, which go against God's moral and ethical code, and

frees us from those sins which will bring us under bondage. Grace is a powerful teaching system that frees and delivers us from sin and allows us to live a holy life that is pleasing to God.

Titus 2:11-12 says:

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”

When God’s hatred toward sin is rightly viewed it will teach us to deny ungodly and wicked practices that represent Satan’s kingdom of darkness. Living under the teaching of the New Testament epistles and the manifestation of God’s grace will instruct or teach every believer to abide by all the unchanging moral laws of God, deny worldly and lustful practices, separate from sin and heathenism, and demonstrate God’s holiness in our lives. The purpose of grace as presented in the New Testament is to “redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people” (Titus 2:14) or a people that God owns, possesses, and sanctifies. Grace places a constraint and control over our lives and teaches us to live godly and righteously in the present world. Grace does not mean we can live a free-for-all kind of lifestyle.

Many Christians have a lopsided and warped view of grace. They have forgotten that grace not only liberates them from the laws condemnation and bondage (Rom. 7:6; 8:15; 2 Cor. 3:17) but also enslaves them to another Master that they must obey (James 1:1; Col. 4:1). Many want to celebrate the liberation that grace brings into their lives but forget about the purification that grace is to have upon their lives. Grace places a constraint and control over our lives and teaches us to live godly and righteously in the present world. Titus 2:12, “Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” Grace reforms our lives.

Ernest Pickering has wisely said:

“The New Testament is not all about what we can do, but it is also about what we cannot do.”

Grace does not make us liberal. It liberates us from sin!

3. Wearing tattoos copies the heathen ways of people.

Deuteronomy 18:9 says:

“When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.”

James M. Freeman in his book, *The New Manners & Customs of the Bible*, says of Leviticus 19:28: "Tattooing Forbidden - Both cutting and tattooing were done by the heathens, and so God forbade His people from doing so in imitation of them" (James M. Freeman, *The New Manners & Customs of the Bible*, 1998 edition, p. 157).

Jeremiah 10:2 also says:

“Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.”

It's very clear that the cutting and marking of flesh were linked with the world of heathenism and demonism. Therefore, the Christian response to these practices should be one of separation and refusal to participate with paganism. The history and meaning of these pagan practices have not changed. Satan is still using these same methods today to promote his kingdom of darkness.

Coffman's Commentary on the Old and New Testament under Leviticus 19:18 says: "The cutting of one's flesh also characterized pagan worship as attested by the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel in the contest with Elijah. Tattooing was also a device of paganism. . . . Christians generally disapprove of tattooing, despite the fact of the widespread use of it by many even today. In the light of what God says here, and in view of the history of it, it seems strange that anyone would pay someone else to tattoo him" (*Coffman's Commentaries on the Old and New Testament*, Leviticus 19:28).

It's interesting that even in the most barbaric and immoral world of ancient Greece and Rome the tattoo was considered *barbaric* and used primarily to mark slaves and criminals.

"Respectable Greeks and Romans did not indulge in decorative

tattooing, which they associated with barbarians. The Greeks, however, learned the technique from the Persians, and used it to mark slaves and criminals so they could be identified if they tried to escape" (Gilbert, Steve, *Tattoo History: A Source Book*, p. 15).

Tattoos were forbidden by God because of their identification with heathenism and satanic practices. For this reason alone we should forsake wearing tattoos on our body as Christians. The Bible in both Old and New Testament condemns involvement in heathen ways and practices (1 Cor. 10:20; 2 Cor. 6:14-17; 1 Pet. 4:4; Rom. 13:13). We are called upon in 2 Corinthians 6:17 to "come out from among them" (unethical fellowship and participation with heathen people), "and be ye separate saith the Lord," (from those gatherings, fellowships, and practices which dishonor God), "and touch not the unclean thing" (the wicked vices and degrading values of heathen people)."

This Bible verse is a clear command that calls for separation from the heathen ways and practices of our unsaved culture. We are not to associate, either directly or indirectly, with those things that pagans do and practice, which represent Satan's kingdom of darkness. A Christian should be willing to separate from the rebellious and heathen culture of our day which promotes the wearing of tattoos, gross body piercing, and such like. Getting a tattoo is touching the unclean thing of heathenism and identifying with something that God clearly denounces in the Bible and which Satan is using today. The Christian is not to *imitate* or *mimic* the debased and deviant ways of heathen people but the ways of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Thess. 1:6; Eph. 5:1).

Think of it this way. Even if the Bible would not directly condemn the wearing of tattoos, it would still be wrong to get a tattoo, simply because of the principle of association with heathenism and the radical element of society that is promoting the wearing of tattoos, which glorify Satanic symbols of death, dragons, and demonism. God has not told His people to accept heathen ways and participate with them. He commanded His people to separate from those practices which represent heathen customs. He has commanded His people to not identify with those evil practices which are being portrayed and promoted by wicked people.

Titus 2:14

“Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

We are not to be a tattooed people but a people that God possesses for Himself and His holy purposes. Peculiar people are not tattooed people but holy people who fear God and who are under God’s possession and control instead of the control of the culture.

Throughout the Bible the Lord condemned all heathen wicked practices, and true followers of the Lord hated the heathen practices. Heathen practices were not adopted and reworked for God’s alleged glory! We read in the Bible how idolatrous altars and groves were destroyed and cut down (Ex. 34:13; Deut. 7:3-5; 12:3). Heathen practices were not "revamped" and put to Christian use.

Numbers 16:26

"And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch *nothing* of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins."

If these verses don’t make it plain enough, read some more!

Deuteronomy 12:2-4,

"Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree: and ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place. Ye shall not do so unto the Lord your God."

The complete destruction of these pagan objects of Canaanite worship was intended to remove the temptation to worship the pagan deities and to stop polluting the pure worship of the Lord with pagan rituals and objects. The Lord would not tolerate a partial commitment. By destroying these pagan objects and centers the Israelites could express their total allegiance to God. The Lord is saying in these verses to destroy all the heathen places, practices, and devices and

don't try and recycle these things in some kind of worship to God ("Ye shall not do so unto the Lord your God"). In other words, don't worship God in the same places and the same ways with these same items. Don't reuse the wood. Don't reuse the silver or gold. Don't emulate or copy the heathen style of worship in any manner. Why should we want to offer to the Lord something that the pagan nations offered to their false gods? God's word could not be any plainer! Don't do it. Man cannot worship God however he chooses. The worship of the true God with pagan ritual or reminder of paganism violates the Ten Commandments.

Deuteronomy 12:29-30 says:

"When the Lord thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land; take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou inquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise."

We can't say, "Good idea. I'm gonna do that too, but try to honor God when doing it!" This kind of reasoning is carnal and contrary to God's Word and holiness. Third John 1:11 reminds us to "follow not that which is evil, but that which is good."

Proverbs 15:9,

"The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness."

One of the ways heathens worshipped and still do worship is by marking their bodies with tattoos (Lev. 19:28). The point is this. Following any heathen practices that represent darkness and wickedness before God becomes a breach and mockery of the holiness of God. We should separate from the heathen practice of tattoos for the simple reason that God's people should not identify with pagan practices that promote the ways of darkness and the devil. As we would say today, "It's a no brainer!"

A Future Heathen Mark

It would seem that the common acceptance of tattoos in our present

generation is desensitizing the world for the coming mark of the beast (Antichrist) which will be the greatest visible, outward, heathen departure, and anti-God display presented before the presence of God. Followers of the Antichrist will wear a common mark that will identify them with the godless, heathen, and devilish man who is termed as the beast.

Revelation 13:16-18

“And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.”

During the seven year Tribulation Period the antichrist will force the people of the earth to receive the mark of the beast. The word for “mark” comes from the word “charagma” which means a scratching, etching, or stamp (as a badge of servitude). Although many see the mark of the beast being fulfilled in the small computer chips that can be implanted in the skin the Bible suggests by the word “mark” that it will actually be a visible tattoo mark that will outwardly identify people as followers of the beast or Antichrist. The Greek word gives the idea of something that is scarred and permanent on a person’s skin. It is not something that is temporary but something that can’t be removed, and which is permanent, in order to identify people as lifetime followers of the Antichrist. I believe the acceptance of the heathen tattoo craze in our present society is desensitizing the people of the world to embrace just one more “mark” to add their collection. It will be the heathen and anti-God mark of the Antichrist. This tattoo will be the biggest display of paganism and wickedness that the world has ever known.

4. Wearing tattoos diminishes the truth that God owns our body.

The Holy Shrine

The New Testament teaches that our body and life is a sacred temple, or sanctuary or shrine, where God dwells through the person

of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19; 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21-22). This makes our bodies a place where the holy God dwells. This has great significance for our everyday living. Since a holy God dwells within us it means that our bodies should only be used for His holy purposes (sanctification - 1 Thess. 4:4) to honor His indwelling presence and sacrificially given to Him (control and ownership – “ye are not your own” - 1 Cor. 6:19-20). We should not allow other things to control us, take ownership of our bodies, or offend the presence of the Holy God that dwells within us.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”

God’s Ownership

The key thoughts associated with God indwelling our bodies have to do with ownership, control, and honor (representing God’s holiness). Let’s first of all think about ownership and control. God dwells within us. This indicates that our bodies as Christians belong to God and they are to be under His complete control and ownership (“ye are not your own” – vs. 19 and “which are God’s – vs. 20). The Lord has redemptive rights over our bodies (“ye are bought with a price” – vs. 20). God owns us since He has purchased us with the shedding of His own blood. We do not have the right to do just anything with our bodies since God redeemed us and we are His slaves.

This is a Biblical principle that is often lost within mainstream Christianity today. If we place a mark on our body which God says is a rebellious act, and which is linked to Satan’s kingdom, then we don’t allow God to have His rightful place of authority over our lives, which He alone deserves, since He owns our body. Think of it this way. A tattoo on your body indicates that God does not have the rightful rule and place in your life. When we disobey God and cover our body with marks that He is not pleased with then we send the message that God isn’t in charge of our body. By wearing a tattoo you are making a public declaration that you are in control of your body instead of God. You are not allowing the Lord to have His rightful

control and place in your life when you disobey Him.
God's Glory

The second thing we need to remember in connection with God's indwelling presence is God's honor. God dwells within us. Since our body is likened to the dwelling place of the most high and holy God we should remember to do nothing with our bodies that would offend the indwelling presence of His holiness. Our bodies are to be an outward expression of His holy presence within us.

1 Corinthians 6:20

“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”

The Bible says we should glorify God in our bodies which means we are to honor God by the way we live with our bodies. God cannot get the praise or honor He deserves when we allow our bodies to be marked with tattoos that represent heathen practices and which are linked with the underworld of demonism. We honor God with our bodies when we do those things that please Him and which represent His holy character and righteousness. We can't glorify or honor God when we are receiving marks on our body that He condemns and which He despises. We can't glorify God or represent His holy name in our bodies when we are practicing rebellion. Christian, just because the world is doing it, doesn't make it right! We must live for the glory of God! Let us never forget this principle.

1 Corinthians 10:31 says:

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

When we practice the customs of heathen people we *misrepresent* God's holy character and God does not get the glory (honor and praise He deserves). We glorify and honor God when we represent His character and reflect His holiness and righteousness by the way we live in our bodies.

The truth is this. Since God dwells within us, He should own our bodies, and since receiving marks upon our body is forbidden due to its moral degradation, it becomes a violation of God's authority or rule which He is to have over our body. It also becomes a violation of His holy presence within. Wearing tattoos is not conducive to the principle of our bodies being God's property and a vessel that accurately reflects God's holiness.

We should want to honor God's holiness by the way we use our bodies and present our bodies to the Lord as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:2). When we disobey God by placing marks upon our bodies we defame God's reputation and indwelling presence.

1 Thessalonians 4:4 commands:

"That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel (the body that God indwells) in sanctification (holiness) and honour (worthy of respect)."

We are reminded once again that our bodies are God's vessels and for this reason we should use them for holy instead of sinful purposes. When we use our bodies only for holy purposes we present them to God in an honorable fashion accepting the fact that He is to control and possess ownership over them. We can sin with our body. This is why we are to possess our vessel in sanctification or holiness (1 Thess. 4:4). The Scriptures are very clear on this point.

Does God Only Look at the Heart?

I know what tattoo people are saying today. God only looks at the heart (1 Sam. 16:7) and not the outward body. But this is not Biblically accurate. Any text out of context becomes a pretext.

1 Samuel 16:7 says:

"But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

The verse in 1 Samuel 16:7 is dealing with God not looking on the physical stature of a person's body. It has nothing to do with God refusing to look on the sinful acts committed by the body. God does not look on the stature of the human body but He does look on the sin committed by the body. The verse in 1 Thessalonians 4:4 and many other verses suggest that God also looks at the body (Eph. 5:3; Col. 2:11; Rom. 6:6, 12-13; 1 Thess. 5:23). Many will use the "God only looks at my heart" argument to excuse their own willful sinning with their body. Yes, God looks at the heart but He also looks at the body and sees when we are using our bodies to sin. Let's stop fooling ourselves!

Sinning With Our Body

The Bible says we can use our bodies to commit outward or external acts of sin that God is displeased with ("Every sin that a man doeth is without the body" - 1 Cor. 6:18). God clearly says we can outwardly sin with our bodies and this is the case when we receive a tattoo on our body (Lev. 19:28). We allow our bodies to be linked with the devil's agenda instead of God's holy path for our lives and yield the outward members of our body "as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin" (Rom. 6:13). Let us never forget this. God is concerned with what we do with our bodies.

As we have seen, we sin against our bodies by allowing particular objects to control our bodies instead of God, which steal away our allegiance to God and His will for our lives, when participating with them. Also, we sin against our bodies when we allow them to be used for unholy or unwholesome purposes (1 Cor. 6:19-20). For these reasons we should not place tattoo marks on our bodies. Receiving tattoos or marks on the body brings the Christian into an alien relationship with demonism and the devil's agenda (1 Cor. 10:20 - "fellowship with devils"). It causes believers to connect with "Belial" (2 Cor. 6:15) instead of connecting with the indwelling presence of Christ (Gal. 2:20).

Doesn't God look down upon the bodily acts of adultery, fornication, and blasphemy with disfavor? Doesn't God hate gossip and all the other sins and vices that are committed by the body? Of course He does. The same is true about receiving tattoos upon our bodies which

is a practice that God has despised throughout the generations.

The Tattoo Shop

Now think of getting a tattoo as a Christian at the local tattoo shop. Throughout the entire process of getting a tattoo the Holy Spirit is present (1 Cor. 6:19). He is living in your body as a Christian while you allow it to be used as an instrument for sin and unrighteousness (Rom. 6:12-13). The Holy Spirit is grieved beyond words (Eph. 4:30), as He witnesses the whole shameful thing, and is deeply wounded in His heart, while at the same time His holiness is offended. God is living within your body and He is outraged at your willingness to stoop so low, mark your body, and go against His clear command. The entire time you are getting your body tattooed God is watching the whole shameful scene, and His holiness is being offended by such a degrading act done to your body, which is to only be used for His holy purposes. Yes, God does look at the body! He sees Christians being tattooed and is not in favor of such actions. God has always looked upon the human body and if one's heart is where it should be the outward body will eventually catch up with what is going on within the heart (2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Pet. 3:3-9).

Placing marks on our bodies that represent a heathen practice or custom, and which continue to be supported by demonism, becomes a clear violation of the holy presence of God, who indwells our Christian bodies. Our bodies are to be vessels that represent who God is (holy) and which are being controlled by God (ownership). As Christians we should never want to practice any behavior or do anything, like wearing tattoos on our bodies, which would dishonor or bring shame to our bodies and God's holy abiding presence within. When we sin with our bodies we dishonor God and His holiness. Therefore, we are to "glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:20).

5. Wearing tattoos neglects the truth that we are created in God's image.

Satan has always been a promoter of bodily mutilation and disfigurement of the human body since man was created to represent the image of God (Gen. 1:26). Of course, the body of man is the

vehicle through which God's image is to be displayed or represented. Satan knows this.

James 3:9 declares:

“Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.”

Man in some measure still reflects God's image, even after the Genesis Fall. He still possesses an inward conscience about sin, higher intelligence than the animals, and the capacity to fellowship with God. Since this is true, man should not tattoo his body. This is because the body God gave to man is to be an outward reflection of the image of God. Marring the body and identifying with Satan's kingdom is an attack on the image of God, which man, the higher creation, was created to outwardly display and represent. Tattoos misrepresent the image of God. This is because they dishonor the body which should represent God's image.

Genesis 1:26

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”

The Bible says that we are created in God's image or likeness (not the image of an ape). Man still retains the image of God in some measure as a higher creation than the animals possessing intellect (complex reasoning), inward morals (conscience), and volitional (choice) which is above the animal creation. He was also created to rule over the animal kingdom (Ps. 8:5) which reflects God's image as a ruler. For these reasons we should not sin against others by cursing them (James 3:9). Cursing or slandering other human beings shows disrespect for the image of God that is represented by the physical humanness of man. God Himself does not have a body (John 4:24; 1 Tim. 6:16) but God gave man a body that can reflect His image or likeness.

This truth takes on even more significance for a Christian. The Christian body is to be a vessel that represents Christlikeness (2 Cor. 3:18), holiness (1 Pet. 1:14-15), and obedience toward God (1 Cor.

6:19-20). If Satan can cause man to disfigure and defame his body, which is designed to represent God's image, then he can get man to outwardly defy God and misrepresent His image and likeness. If the devil can get people to place marks on their bodies, which represent His kingdom of darkness and pagan practices, then it's one way he can get man to follow him and keep people from reflecting God's image in their bodies. Marking the body with tattoos is kicking God in the face. It's a way to defame God's image and likeness which is represented in some measure through the outward display of our bodies.

Since God's image is to be represented through our bodies, we should not do anything to them (like wearing tattoos), which would demonstrate disrespect for the image of God that man is intended to portray or reflect. In short, if we are created higher than the animal world, then we should not live like the animal world, and do disrespectful things to others and our own bodies. The human body was designed by God, who intended it to be whole and beautiful (1 Thess. 5:23). Disfiguring the body dishonors God, in whose image the person was created.

The only marks we are to have on our bodies are the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 6:17

"From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

These are the marks that God sees and approves!

6. Wearing tattoos is a form of pride.

1 John 2:16 says:

"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

The purpose of tattoos is so people can show off their body to others. People tell me that tattoos are a way they can express themselves. My question is this. What are they expressing? They are actually expressing the age old sin called the pride of life. The devil promoted this within the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:6). Satan has always

appealed to the pride of life and this is why he even tried to tempt the Lord Jesus Christ to exhibit pride.

Matthew 4:8

“Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.”

Yes, the glory of them! It is vain glory (Phil. 2:3) and man’s glory (1 Pet. 1:24) but it’s not God’s glory (1 Cor. 1:31). Human glory is nothing less than the pride of life. Wearing tattoos which are specifically designed to express oneself and be visibly seen by others is a form of outward show and pride. It’s an outward adornment whereby man specifically seeks to impress, express, and promote himself instead of God’s glory. Ask yourself these questions. Why did you get a tattoo? Do you want others to be impressed by it? Do you want others to compliment you for it? Do you want to outwardly express yourself? Do you want others to notice it? Pride!! This is why people get tattoos. They want to elevate themselves in some way and show-off their body.

The simple truth is this. People get tattoos with the expressed purpose to be seen of men (Matt. 6:5). The Bible commands us that we are not to do anything “with eyeservice, as menpleasers” (Eph. 6:6; Col. 3:22). When people display tattoos, so others can see them, they are really saying, “Look at me.” We should not seek to glorify ourselves before others. We want to glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31). Let us not become part of the “Look at me” generation who wears tattoos to show-off their body and gain the attention of others. Attempting to express ourselves and show-off our bodies through tattoos is a form of pride.

Proverbs 21:4

“An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin.”

7. Wearing tattoos is a mark of rebellion against God.

One writer supporting tattoos comments on how people in our current culture modify their appearance for beauty in many ways such as clothing choice, makeup, plastic surgery, haircutting and coloring,

weight loss, and ear piercing, which in our cultural context does not denote a connection with evil. This is true. However, the writer forgets that God did not condemn haircutting, hair coloring, makeup, weight loss, or adornments that were not connected with evil in the Levitical code or anywhere in the Bible. But He did condemn the wearing of tattoos (Lev. 19:28). Today many people try and sanctify their rebellion.

1 Samuel 15:23

“For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. . .”

The Bible from cover to cover repeatedly condemns rebellion. The Lord God considered rebellion so serious He compared rebellion to witchcraft. This is because those who practice witchcraft open themselves up to demons and satanic intrusion in their lives. All rebellion is fueled in some measure by the underworld of demons. The Holy Spirit of God does not lead you to get a tattoo. Stop fooling yourself.

Leviticus 19:28 once again states:

“Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the Lord.”

Once again, it's not just the type of mark that a person wears (a tattoo of Jesus or a slogan “Jesus Saves”) but the outright rebellion against God's command that makes tattooing a wrong practice for Christians. Wearing marks on your body is a sign of rebellion against God Almighty. You shake your fist at God when you get a tattoo!

Sanctified Rebellion?

Of course, some will say, “But these crosses on my arms have spiritual significance” or “This Bible quote of John 3:16 on my arm is a way to witness to others.” This sounds logical from man's viewpoint but not from God's viewpoint. We must remember that God's word tells us we cannot put “new wine” into old bottles (Luke 5:37). The two won't don't mix. They will cause an explosion. In other words, we cannot take a practice that has been embraced by heathenism, promoted by demonism, and condemned by God and turn it into

something that is honoring to the Lord (2 Cor. 6:14-17). This is something that is impossible to do from God's viewpoint which by the way is the right viewpoint. If you take a pig and put him in a tuxedo, all you have is a dressed-up pig! You still have a pig (Prov. 11:22). This is the scenario you have when you try to dress up or change the meaning of tattoos. No matter what you display on your body, it's still rebellion against God's design and ways. God does not want His children to mark themselves with tattoos. We can't wiggle out of what God says unless we turn the tables on what God has spoken concerning light and darkness.

Isaiah 5:20 warns:

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"

Others will say, "But those pagans were worshipping false gods and idols and images. My tattoos are a symbol of my faith in the only true God." This is a lame argument. Whether you have on your flesh a dove, a crown of thorns, cross, or a "face of Jesus" you are still doing exactly that the Bible tells you not to do (Lev. 19:28 - "Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the Lord").

So what if you have a tattoo across the back of your neck which says, "Jesus Saves." You are still identifying with Satan's workings and representing his kingdom of darkness ("the rulers of the darkness of this world" - Eph. 6:12). Stop trying to sanctify your disobedience!

If there is one message the tattoo cries out loud and clear it's the message of rebellion. Throughout history tattoos have symbolized rebellion. There's nothing normal about a tattoo. A tattoo is the sign of rebellion against God and what is decent and right. When you look at a person filled with tattoos there is something evil and rebellious about that person.

They'll Know We Are Christians by our Tattoos?

Something else needs to be said at this point. God is not impressed with images that supposedly represent Him!

Exodus 20:4

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth."

Deuteronomy 27:15

"Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the Lord, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place. And all the people shall answer and say, Amen."

Of course, those who wear tattoos are not necessarily idolaters. But let us learn a principle from these verses. God is not impressed with outward images, signs, and symbols that display Himself or Christianity. God wants us to represent Him and Christianity by the words that we say and the loving and holy actions that we convey to others. They'll know we are Christians by our love (John 13:35). They'll know we are Christians by our witness and walk (Eph. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:12) - not by our alleged Christian tattoos and symbols that we display.

Still others will say, "I have a tattoo because I want to be identified as a Christian." This is silly reasoning. The truth is this; you should actually *refuse* to display a tattoo on your body if you truly want to identify with Christianity and what is right. Furthermore, you should not have to go around announcing, "You know I'm a Christian, by my tattoo." No, instead, your changed manner of living and your Gospel witness for Jesus Christ should identify you as a Christian.

1 Thessalonians 1:6-8 reads:

"And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: So that ye were ensamples (examples) to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing."

People should see your inner faith and love for Christ by your walk, talk, and deeds – not by tattoos, bumper stickers, or graven images on your arms or in your back yard. Remember the scribes? They

wanted everyone to see their holiness. They loved the long flowing robes that identified them as religious folks. But this is what Jesus said of them.

Matthew 23:5

“But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments..”

Friend, don't be showy like the Pharisees and Scribes, desirous that man can see and identify that you are part of a religious sect (Mark 12:38 and Luke 20:46). When it comes to Christianity Christ did not summons His children to wear outward visible marks on their body to represent His cause. Rather, Christ instituted changed living as the sign of discipleship (Luke 9:23; 2 Cor. 5:17).

Matthew 5:16

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

As Christians, we should not crave or desire that man sees how committed we are through our religious symbols, adornments, and tattoos on our arms or necks. We should desire that man sees our good works, or changed manner of living and newness of life (Rom. 6:4; 7:6), lived out in everyday conduct and actions which glorify Christ. It's the new creation emphasis in everyday living (2 Cor. 5:17) – not the new tattoo styles – that is important to God. Yes, there are some *ornaments* that we should wear.

1 Peter 3:4

"But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

God is more interested in lip and lifestyle and not tattoos and outward adornment. If you really want to be identified as a Christian and do something for the Lord, why don't you routinely visit some shut-in elderly folks (James 1:27)? Why don't you visit some lost people who are in prison? Why don't you live out the fruit of the Spirit in your life (Gal. 5:22-23) so that people will see the evidence of true Christianity working through you (Phil. 2:13) instead of being tattooed upon you?

Why don't you pray for opportunities to share the Gospel with lost people? When we choose to live different than the unsaved, and witness to them about the love of Christ, it's then that people will see how important Christ is to us and how committed we are to Him. The unsaved will also understand the sacrifice that Jesus made through your changed manner of living and Gospel witness. Doesn't getting a tattoo or body piercing sound rather lame when comparing it to fruitful service, changed living, and Gospel witnessing?

Many people will say that their tattoo opens doors of evangelism with a certain crowd of people who would never hear the Gospel otherwise and that wearing tattoos gives them cultural relevancy and becomes a helpful as a witnessing tool. Since when do we need tattoos to win people to Christ? Could tattooed people be won to Christ before Christians starting wearing them? Again, to this kind of twisted reasoning we would ask, "Do we need to become a drunkard to win a drunkard to Christ or must we become a drug addict to win someone to Christ who is on drugs? It's the power of the Gospel (Rom. 1:16) and God who draws people to Christ (John 6:44).

Unsaved people saw Jesus living through His followers and learned what it meant to be a saved follower of Christ by hearing them share God's word and seeing the fruit of their lives. The unsaved are not impressed with tattooed bodies but with changed lives (Ps. 40:2-3).

1 Thessalonians 1:8

"For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing."

These Christians shared the Gospel message wherever they went and they did it without tattoos! How amazing! They did it without worldly pragmatism and trying to act like the unsaved and look like the lost. You see, it wasn't their outward likeness to the unsaved crowd that won people to Christ. It was the message of the Gospel that made the difference. Faith does not come by the wearing of tattoos but by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17).

Acts 4:13

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived

that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”

What people need to see is our outward boldness, witness, and stand for Christ. They don't need to see our tattoos, body piercing, or listen to some perverted Contemporary Christian Rock Music to impress them. Jesus commanded His followers to go into all the world and preach the Gospel (Mark 16:15) and there is no fine print that says, “You must wear tattoos to do it or play worldly music to reach people!” The disciples didn't try to be fashionable like the world. They didn't seek to entertain the world. They spoke to people by the power of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Holy Spirit convicted the lives of the unsaved and changed them (1 Cor. 2:4-4; Acts 8:4-5). They didn't need gimmicks, cool fashions, tattoos, or other fads of the day to relate to people and reach people and neither do we!

Think of this. We don't have to worry about trying to please people by accommodating their heathen lifestyles. We should not be concerned about looking a certain way, or being tattooed in a certain manner, so that we please sinners.

Galatians 1:10

"For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

Reaching People

Of course, there are those who say, "But I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22), using this verse as a scapegoat for wearing and witnessing with tattoos. However, any verse taken out of its context or intended meaning becomes a pretext. Paul is not saying that he must wear tattoos, smoke crack or heroine, or become a fornicator to witness to those who are involved with these types of sins. How ludicrous! Paul is not talking about adopting unholy and unsanctified methods to witness for Christ but to give up certain liberties he had to become a better witness for Christ (refusing to eat meat at certain times, refusing to offend Jews under the law by flaunting his freedom from Mosaic regulation before others). This dark world needs light. Lost mankind does not need Christians to come down to their dark and fleshly level.

Instead, they need Christians to rise above their level. It's not sameness that reaches lost people but difference – a different lifestyle and a different message of repentance and new life through Christ (Acts 26:18).

People who use these arguments are not thinking Biblically, discerningly, and principally will try and conjure up just about any argument to sanctify their disobedience. The point is this. We should not try and sanctify our rebellion and make it acceptable to God.

1 Samuel 15:23

“For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. . .”

Rebellion is still one thing – rebellion! Every tattoo book and every article concerning tattoos will admit that tattoos are a sign of open rebellion. It's worth noting that all the following quotes are from pro tattoo books. They do not come from carnal, misguided, and worldly Christians who are trying to promote their tattoos.

"Since body art is still not mainstream, having marks on your body that you put there on purpose shows the world your rebellious and unconventional nature" (Jean-Chris Miller, *The Body Art Book : A Complete, Illustrated Guide to Tattoos, Piercings, and Other Body Modifications*, p. 32).

"In this culture, a tattooed person is still looked at as a rebel, as someone who has very visibly stepped out of the bounds of normal society . . ." (Michelle Delio, *Tattoo: The Exotic Art of Skin Decoration*, p. 75).

There is no such thing as sacred ink!

Steve Gilbert, in the very popular, pro-tattoo book, *Tattoo History: A Source Book*, documents that even the word "tattoo means . . . a mark of disgrace or reproach. The Latin word for tattoo was stigma and the original meaning is reflected in modern dictionaries. Among the definitions of 'stigma' listed by Webster are a 'prick with a pointed instrument,' . . . 'a distinguishing mark cut into the flesh of a slave or a criminal,' and 'a mark of disgrace or reproach'" (Gilbert, Steve, *Tattoo History: A Source Book*, p. 15).

A tattoo is a mark of disgrace, reproach, and rebellion against God. Criminals, drug addicts, sex perverts, and social outlaws are the overwhelming majority of tattooed people. Statistics, both old and recent, clearly reveal tattoos have been largely worn by the rebellious and deviant people in our society. When will we learn that we should not identify with the rebellious and godless element in our society which are seeking to promote evil things (2 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 12:2)?

"In addition to being a form of self-destruction, the tattoo seals the wearer off from the rest of normal society forever. It's not all that surprising to note that the largest number of tattooed in Japan belong to the underworld, and in America tattoos are most prevalent either in jail or hard rock bands" (Danny Sugerman, *Appetite for Destruction: the Days of Guns N' Roses*, p. 40).

"It was ancient Japanese tradition to tattoo convicted criminals . . ." (Laura Reybold, *Everything you need to know about the dangers of tattooing and body piercing*, p. 15).

"A study of young offenders on the West Coast of America concluded that delinquents tattoo themselves significantly more often than non-delinquents, and that the inclination develops at an early age without any thought for the future" (Ronald Scutt, *Art, Sex and Symbol*, 1974, p. 113).

"In the Borstal institutions [criminals] it has been estimated that the incidence of tattooing can be as high as 75 per cent" (Ronald Scutt, *Ibid.*, 1974, p. 113).

Investigations by law enforcement officials also came to the conclusion that: "the presence of ornamental body tattoos could serve to indicate the existence of personality disorders which are liable to manifest themselves in criminal behavior" (Ronald Scutt, *Ibid.*, 1974, p. 117).

"Therefore, many authorities link tattooing with aggression, i.e. anti-authoritarianism, and it cannot be disputed that gangs and delinquents, juvenile or otherwise, display massive evidence of aggression" (Ronald Scutt, *Ibid.*, 1974, p. 114).

Comprehensive studies performed in Denmark, revealed the following enlightening statistics concerning tattoos:

- 42% of inmates for short-term detention were tattooed
- 60% of inmates for young men with behavior difficulties
- 72% of inmates for young men
- 52% of inmates population.

One of the most important steps in prison rehabilitation is the removal of the tattoo. According to many serious studies, a tattoo is linked so strong to criminal behavior and delinquency, that without question, the mere decoration of the tattoo inherently contributes to the criminal behavior pattern. Therefore, removal tattoos is a sign of reform and change from deviant and destructive behavior.

"This [tattoos] is one of the problems behind prison rehabilitation. Hence the reason why some plastic surgeons associated with prison service are prepared to spend an enormous amount of time removing tattoos, especially those on exposed areas. . ." (Ronald Scutt, *Ibid.* 1974, p. 181).

The famous architect, Adolf Loos, who also studied the connection to tattoos and crime, blatantly wrote: "Tattooed men who are not behind bars are either latent criminals or degenerate aristocrats. If someone who is tattooed dies in freedom, then he does so a few years before he would have committed murder" (Adolf Loos, 1962 *Ornament und Verbrechen*).

Studies have linked tattoos to homosexuality, lesbianism, and gross sexual perversion. "To be fair to those who maintain that tattooing is linked to homosexuality, investigations conducted in a New Zealand Borstal for girls revealed that of the 60 per cent tattooed, 90 per cent admitted to lesbian behaviour during corrective treatment . . . Yet further analysis indicated a ratio of aggression to the number of tattoos, and that the most heavily tattooed girls were unstable and insecure and tended to take the masculine role in their sex encounters" (Ronald Scutt, *Ibid.*, 1974, p. 87).

Other conditions are associated with those who receive tattoos. "Among these conditions Raspa cited: impulsiveness, low self

esteem, lack of self control, homosexual orientation, sexual sadomasochism, bondage, fetishism, bisexuality, lesbianism, antisocial personality, borderline personality disorder, schizotypal personality disorder, mania and bipolar disorder, and also schizophrenia" (Raspa, Robert F. and John Cusack 1990, *Psychiatric Implications of Tattoos*, American Family Physician. 41: p. 1481 cited in Gilbert, Steve, *Tattoo History: A Source Book*, p. 159).

The Best Testimony

The point is this. Wearing tattoos is a sign of rebellion against God! Even secular tattooists admit to this. The classes of people in our society that began to wear tattoos and who continue to wear tattoos are rebellious people who don't care about values or virtues which honor God. They are rebels and outcasts of society. The Bible teaches we should separate from the practices and customs of those who are rebellious in society and not adopt their pagan lifestyles and mannerisms.

We should represent Christianity in the best possibility light (Eph. 5:3 – “as becometh saints” and “behaviour as becometh holiness” – Titus 2:3). Christians should seek to avoid taking on the appearance (1 Thess. 5:22) that we are identifying or associating (Eph. 5:7, 11) with the questionable, extreme, radical, worldly, and unbiblical movements within our society, such as outlaws, criminals, long hair on men, the rebellious rock culture, and sexual perversion of all kind (homosexuality, unisex philosophy, pornography). These types of people and movements represent rebellion to natural order and rebellion to God and what is righteous, by notoriously promoting things such as lust, sex perversion, drugs, tattoos, gross body piercing, and crime.

The Bible believing Christian should be willing to separate from those practices which are being promoted within a pagan and corrupt society and not associate with them in any fashion (Rev. 18:4). In light of the day in which we live the believer should present the least questionable testimony before the world (Phil. 1:10). God's people should represent Christianity as a non-rebellious movement of people that are different than the world and its standards, which represent rebellion against God.

Was Jesus a Rebel?

One would-be Christian said, "Hey dude, yea man, I'm a rebel just like Jesus. Yea, man, He was the real rebel. He rebelled against the system, man. Yea, man, He's the ultimate rebel. Man, like, that's why I wear my tattoos – I'm rebelling against the system."

Would Jesus wear a tattoo? No! First, Jesus lived under the moral laws of God and fulfilled them perfectly (Matt. 5:17). Wearing tattoos was forbidden (Lev. 19:28). Only misinformed and misguided Christians would ever come to the conclusion that Jesus would wear a tattoo. Second, Jesus was not a rebel of society. The Scripture does not teach this anywhere. He did not rebel against the accepted norms of society and try and create a rebel order that was in defiance against moral decency and the acceptable laws of the land (Rom. 13:7).

Heavily tattooed, Sonny of the "Rastafarianism-Christianity" punk-rap-metal rock band P.O.D. claims Jesus Christ was the first rebel and the first punk rocker. "We believe that Jesus was the first rebel. He was the first punk rocker going against all the rest of it."

Statements like this show how unscriptural and unlearned some people are when it comes to the Bible and the person of our blessed Lord. Let's get something straight! The Lord Jesus Christ was not a rebel! The Bible is very clear on this matter. Jesus never rebelled against societal order that was decent and orderly and He certainly did not rebel against the orders from God the Father. Jesus was not mainstream when it came to following sinful patterns within a society. He rebuked sinners and evil ways (Matt. 23). He rebelled against every sinful pattern and practice within society (John 8:29). But Jesus was certainly not a rebel in relationship to decency, orderliness, and following God's will and holy path for His life.

Philippians 2:8 says:

"And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

The Lord Jesus Christ was obedient unto death – even the death of the cross. Even in the Garden of Gethsemane, knowing that every wicked and abominable sin committed in history was going to be placed upon Him, knowing that He was going to drink the cup of the wrath of God and be separated from the Father, even in all of this Christ did not become a rebel. For in this hour He prayed, “not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). The truth is this. The Lord Jesus Christ rebelled against all sin and worldliness (1 John 2:15-17). But Jesus was not a rebel that tried to follow the lowly and degrading element within society during His day. He did not step out of the accepted norms of decency and respectful living. Jesus was not a rebel but a Redeemer! Furthermore, the only scars on His body are the ones put there by evil men that crucified Him (Zech. 13:6). These scars were not self inflicted but superimposed upon His body.

Conclusion

Just because society approves of something does not make it right in God's eyes (Judges 17:6). Our society at large, also approves of abortion and divorce. However, the Bible makes it clear that God doesn't approve of these things (Matthew 18:6; Malachi 2:16). God's moral laws never change from Old Testament to New Testament. The New Testament is not all about what we *can* do, but it is also about what we *cannot* do (Titus 2:11-12). God views the tattooing of the human body as a sinful act done against Him. This is because tattoos are an attempt to defame God's image and glory, which is to be represented by the proper conduct and outward display of the human body (James 3:9). Cutting the human body is a cut against the image of God which man is to represent.

Receiving a tattoo is an act that plays into the devilish mark of heathenism that was connected to demonism (Lev. 19:28). These practices have not changed their association or meaning over the years and when entering into them cause the believer to represent darkness instead of light (Matt. 5:16; Eph. 5:8, 11; 1 Pet. 2:9). God wants us to holy instead of hellish! Wearing tattoos associates a person with heathenism and demonism which the Scripture clearly condemns (Jer. 10:2; 1 Cor. 10:20). No believer should link or “ink” themselves with Satan's agenda.

To deny that tattoos were not historically promoted by the devil and demonism and that Satan is no longer involved in the tattoo business is to live in a fool's paradise.

Again, there is no such thing as sacred ink! Displaying a tattoo is an outward expression of rebellion against God (1 Sam. 15:23) and takes on the form of the pride of life which originates from the old nature (1 Tim. 2:15-16). Getting a mark upon your body is rebellion no matter what the tattoo represents. One should not try and sanctify their rebellion. Tattoos disgrace the human body and the indwelling presence of God who resides within the Christian body (1 Cor. 6:19-20). We can sin with our body (Rom. 6:12-13; 1 Cor. 6:18). God looks on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7) but He also looks on the body (1 Thess. 4:4) since the sinful or wrong things we do with our bodies can be an indication that we are living in open rebellion against God and His laws (Jer. 17:9). God owns us ("ye are not your own" - 1 Cor. 6:19) and we should therefore obey His commands so we might live in purity instead of rebellion against His moral and ethical commands. As Christians we should also honor God's holy presence within us by refusing to get a tattoo and offending God. God cannot get the glory through the wearing of tattoos (1 Cor. 10:31). This is because wearing a tattoo does not promote God's holy ways.

If a person was tattooed before God saved them then they have two choices. One, they can get them removed, which at the present time of this writing is painful and costly. Some Christians choose to go this route. Two, they can just live with them. God does not condemn a person because of the things they did in ignorance before they were saved ("I did it ignorantly in unbelief" - 1 Tim. 1:13). We reap what we sow (Gal. 6:7) and must often live with certain unchangeable effects connected with our past lives. But this does not mean God can no longer use us (Phil. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:17). God does not hold our past against us when we repent of our wrongdoing (Rev. 2:5). We should not look down upon Christians who have been tattooed either before they were saved, or even after they are saved, since everyone is at various stages of spiritual growth in their Christian experience (2 Pet. 3:18).

Our battle is not with tattooed Christians but with Satan's agenda, evil program, and the world's intrusion into the lives of God's saints.

However, this does not ignore the fact that getting a tattoo is a wrong choice that dishonors God. Nor does it ignore the fact how many Christians regret getting a tattoo after they discover what God's Word says concerning tattoos. We should obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29). The point of this study is to help Christians to see the error of painting or marking their bodies before they receive a tattoo. To follow God's pattern for holy living can save our lives from regret and embarrassment. It can also keep us from moving deeper and deeper into other sinful patterns and compromising ways (Psalm 1:1; Gal. 5:9).

God would want us to be teachable and reachable in this area. Again, may God's people display the best possible testimony for Christ and represent Christianity in the best possible light (Matt. 5:14), in an age when all the boundaries are disappearing and the definitions are changing (Prov. 22:28). May the unsaved "think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot" (1 Pet. 4:4). May the rebellious and lost people of this world see that we are Christians by our love, holiness, witness, walk, and change of lifestyle (2 Cor. 5:17). Transformed living is what will impact people for Christ - not symbols, tattoos, or artificial representations of Christianity. Let us keep our lives simple and pure as we live for God in the midst of a "crooked and perverse nation" (Phil. 2:15) or generation of people that have given their lives over to sinful symbols and satanic strongholds.