

# *Should Christians Wear Tattoos?*

By Lynette Schaefer

It is clear that we are living in the end times, right before the return of our Lord Jesus Christ to rapture home His blood-bought bride, the Church. It is also clear that these are perilous times (2 Tim 3:1). The current trend that more and more Christians seem to be picking up is tattooing. There are even "Christian" tattoo shops opening up, and deceived Christians are flocking to them more and more. They justify this activity by saying they are "tattooing for Jesus" and it's fun to sport their new, colorful images or statements. Therefore, tattooing is no more an activity that the Bible expressly forbids, but it's become the latest, cool, fun thing to do; and tattooing is popularly regarded as simply "body art". Well, let's explore what tattooing really is and what God has to say about it.

**1. The Mark of Blood.** The tattooing procedure involves cutting the flesh with a sharp needle or instrument in order to carve out or make designs. The result is something called "blood-letting". Blood-letting has both occultic and demonic origins as it is considered a power source that is supernaturally unleashed. Many pro-tattoo sources describe tattooing as having a magical, occultic connection with blood and blood-letting as being normal. Several pro-tattoo historians indicate the connection with scarification and blood-letting associated with religious practices. Another source indicates "the importance of licking the blood that was released during tattoo operations" (Steve Gilbert, "Tattoo History: A Source Book", pg. 181). We read in 1 Kings 18:25-28 the account of the prophets of Baal who met with Elijah to find out who was the true God. These were satanists who were attempting to unleash supernatural power by cutting themselves (vs. 28). In the New Testament, there was a man named Legion who was possessed by demons, as seen in Mark 5:1-9, who went about cutting himself with stones (vs. 5). Leviticus 19:28 says "Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD." (emphasis mine)

**2. The Cup of Devils.** Historically, the origin of the tattoo is associated with paganism, demonism, Baal worship, shamanism, mysticism, heathenism, cannibalism and many other pagan beliefs. The tattoo has NEVER been connected with Bible believing Christians. But today, in the 21st century, trends are reverting to paganistic practices to include the modern Christian and the new "Christian" tattoo shop. Satan is the god of this world and his agenda is to deceive many Christians, especially in the last days. But the fact remains that the tattoo has its roots in beliefs and practices that are demonic and pagan. Many pro-tattoo books indicate that tattooing is a magical rite and the tattooist is respected as a priest or shaman; it is connected to a religious ceremony and performed by priests or priestesses; it is intended to put the human soul in harmony with supernatural forces; at other times dancing accompanies the tattooing ritual to exorcise demons. In other words, it is connected with the spirit world and a tattoo is really much more than simply a body decoration. Today's popular tattooing craze is "tribal tattoos", which are pure paganism. These designs bear serious symbolic mystical and occult meanings. They are strongly connected with channels into spiritual and demonic possession. Many pro-tattoo artists and historians can attest to this by saying things like, "tattoos have a power and magic all their own", "there is in addition to the opening of numerous inlets for evil to enter", "allowing his clients' demons to help guide the needle". Ronald Scutt, in his exhaustive book, *Art, Sex and Symbol*, covers a lot about the history and culture of tattoos. He documents that most of the time

tattoos are associated with spiritual, religious and mystical purposes; linking it to mystical significance, sun-worship, serpent worship, and the sun-god Baal. Author Steve Gilbert, of *Tattoo History: A Source Book*, p. 99, records, "The Spaniards, who had never heard of tattooing, recognized it at once as the work of Satan." Yet today's gullible Christians are out there in droves "marking themselves for Jesus"! Pagan tattooing is not just from the dark ages: many body artists perform ritual tattoos today as the quotes from tattoo authors above bear witness. Some will burn incense or light candles. 1 Cor. 10:21 says, "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils."

**3. The Mark of Death.** Lev. 19:28 says, "Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD." Yet DEATH is the number one theme of tattoos! References from tattoo books again reveal this as a fact: "Death and darkness have always been a classic tattoo theme - skulls, snakes, demons" (*The Body Art Book*, pg. 56); Henry Ferguson in *The Art of the Tattoo*, states "probably the most popular tattooed image of today, the all-pervasive grinning skull!"; "Skulls imprinted on skin abound, and depictions of the Grim Reaper are commonly seen"; "Possibly, at the same time, to wear a death's figure on one's body may be an invocation of whatever indefinable forces of nature...in an attempt to protect the wearer from such a fate". Tattoo shops mostly display morbid scenes of death, demons, serpents, and hell. Grim reapers, flaming skulls, snakes crawling through skulls, demons, Satan, pornography, blasphemy, naked flames of hell - every satanic scene of hell is glorified. Who really is the Master Tattooist? Satan, of course (Rev. 6:8; Heb. 2:14)! He is the author of Death; and the representative of Hell (Rev. 6:8; Matt. 25:41); also of the Serpent (Gen. 3:1; Rev. 12:9; Rev. 20:1-2); whereas Jesus is Life (John 1:3; John 6:48; John 11:25; John 14:6; Acts 3:15; Ro. 6:23; 1 John 1:1-2; 1 John 5:12). Many tattoo artists embody satanic symbols of death and hell while they display demonic scenes in their shops, calling it "art". They are often people who demonstrate their allegiance to Satan with vile and filthy depictions of the underworld.

**4. The Mark of Rebellion.** The Bible condemns all rebellion throughout its pages and declares that rebellion is as bad as witchcraft (1 Sam. 15:23). It is clear that the tattoo has always been an indication of a spirit of rebellion and deviancy on its wearers. All the tattoo books make comments about tattooing being rebellious. In addition, the tattoo is considered a mark of disgrace or reproach by the same tattoo books. Throughout history, the tattoo was used to mark the criminal, adulterers, traitors, deserters, the deviant and outcast. Thirdly, it has been the mark of the sideshow freak throughout history. Also, it is the mark of indecency. They were associated with barbarians in barbaric, immoral Greece and Rome. One tattoo book, "Art, Sex and Symbol", 1974, by Ronald Scutt, pg. 179, says "In a society that considers nudity as dirty, indecent, and subversive or morality ... - it is not surprising that decorations to the body are allocated to the same category." The tattoo is also considered the mark of depravity by many tattoo books. Studies have been done that indicate a high percentage of deviant behaviors and troubled persons that were tattooed. Studies have also been done that link tattoos to homosexuality, lesbianism, and gross sexual perversion. Statements made in many of the tattoo books bear this out. Recent studies on today's tattooed young people indicate 1) they are nearly four times more likely to engage in sexual intercourse; 2) Over two times more likely to experience alcohol related problems; 3) Nearly two times more likely to use illegal drugs; 4) Over two times more likely to express violent behavior; and 5) Over two times more likely to drop out of high school. What

about Jesus? Wasn't He a rebel? NO WAY! To the contrary: Jesus was 100 percent OBEDIENT unto death - even the death of the Cross (Phil. 2:8)! In the Garden of Gethsemane, He prayed, "not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42-44). If there was the slightest chance that Jesus was a rebel, then He would have sinned against God, and we would all be lost!

**5. Tattoo's Deadly Little Secret.** It is a well-known fact that tattooing runs a risk of acquiring any number of deadly diseases, including Hepatitis C and AIDS. The reason is because the needle that is used to tattoo punctures the skin 3,000 times a minute. In an hour, that would be 180,000 times that puncture wounds provide a potential path to a deadly disease. Not only that, but it is also well documented that tattoo shops are not regulated by the government to uphold medical standards. Also, many tattoo artists do not inform their clients of possible infection from the needle or the ink. The Mayo Clinic sounds a warning about commercial tattooing: "Few states have hygienic regulations to ensure safe tattooing practices in commercial tattoo parlors, and even fewer monitor and enforce standards". (Body Piercing and Tattoos: More than Skin Deep, Mayo Clinic, [www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com)). Tattoos can cause many chronic skin disorders such as sarcoid, keloid scarring, allergic dermatitis, photosensitivity reactions, psoriasis, and tumors. Finally, the Bible gives a real warning about this sort of procedure (Psm.38: 5-8).

**6. Tattoos and the Bible.** We know already what Lev. 19:28 says. But people use that to say, "But that's in the OLD Testament! What about the New?" Well, do you know that Lev. 19:29 says not to prostitute your daughter; yet it says nothing in the New Testament about that, making it okay to prostitute your child? I think not! These moral laws are timeless and are as applicable now as then. Lev. 19:28 indicates that we are to not print ANY marks on us. Period. Lev. 19:26-28 is a condemnation of assorted pagan, witchcraft and heathen practices, of which tattooing is clearly one of them. Every commentary written on Lev. 19:28 says that tattooing comes from pagan origins. Isaiah 44:5 & Ezekiel 9:4 indicates "he will write with his hand to the Lord." Some go as far as to say that Jesus Christ is tattooed (Rev. 19:16)! If that is literally true, then Jesus is a sinner who disobeyed (Lev. 19:28). Finally, because our bodies are the Temple of the Living God (1Cor. 6:19-20), God wants them pure for His glory. He who defiles the temple of God, him will God destroy (1Cor. 3:16-17)! God meant what He said (Num. 23:19; Gal. 6:7-8)! 2 Cor. 6:16 says, in part, "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God."

**7. Tattoo:** The Mark of Regret. Those who get tattoos while in a backslidden state will forever have to live with them. Even those who flock to get laser surgery in an attempt to remove the tattoos will have to go through a lot of expensive and painful procedures, and yet the tattoo will never be totally removed and will just look ugly. Many who are foolish enough to get tattoos later regret them and hate looking at them. There are many consequences of getting "marked": spiritual, health, social. Once a person has that mark put on them, they are then in a different category: one of the gang, cool, and spiritually defiled against God who shakes their fist at His law. Not to mention that after getting the tattoo, some serious medical problems could start to germinate. Getting a tattoo can also damage relationships with friends, family, teachers or employers. According to Bonnie B. Graves, *Tattooing and Body Piercing*, p. 43, many jobs are not available to those who have visible body art. So, then, is getting a tattoo really worth all the consequences?

If you are wearing tattoos and are still unconvinced that any of the above applies to you, then consider this: tattooing, in addition to being disobedient, is idolatrous because it displays an image. If you are "tattooing for Jesus" and think that's acceptable, it isn't because the "Jesus" (or any symbol) you are marking yourself with is an image. God says very clearly and explicitly that we are to have no other gods before Him, and that it is He and He alone who is supreme (Ex. 20:3; Is. 45:5).

The Bible expressly tells us to keep ourselves unspotted from the world (Jas. 1:27), to abstain from the appearance of evil (1Thess. 5:22), and that friendship with the world is enmity with God (Jas. 4:4). We are instructed to come out from among them and be separate from the world (2Cor. 6:17). Christians therefore have the responsibility to obey God's commands and abstain from worldly associations, pastimes, or habits; not just out of duty but because we love God and have a living relationship with Him (John 14:15). Please beware that ALL tattooing is wrong, not just the graphic stuff described above. It all has the same origin in paganism and is expressly commanded by the Lord that we are to avoid this practice at all costs!

If you received tattoos before conversion to Christ, then you have already been forgiven for that. On the other hand, if you have received tattoos after giving your life to Christ, you need to repent of this sin and not repeat it, under any circumstances, because it is considered abominable.