



TATTOOS AND SKIN PIERCINGS

By George Lujack

This article will affirm that tattoos and skin piercings are ‘desecration of the flesh’ practices, which are forbidden by God in Scripture.

LEVITICUS 19:28:

You shall not make any *cuttings in your flesh* for the dead, *nor print any marks upon you: I am YHWH (the Lord).*

DEUTERONOMY 14:1:

You are the children of YHWH (the Lord) your God: *you shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead.*

A tattoo is a series of puncture wounds that carry dye into the different levels of the skin.

Most people who have a tattoo do not develop any problems. However, problems with tattoos do occur including:

- Infection at the tattoo site
- Minor or serious skin allergic reactions to the tattooing method or dye
- Scarring, which can include raised scar tissue
- Spread of infectious disease, such as hepatitis B, C, tetanus, tuberculosis, or HIV if a dirty needle or equipment is used

In general, the reason a person gets a tattoo varies from individual to individual. The reasons people generally say that they get a tattoo are to:

- Feel more rebellious
- Feel more sexy, macho
- Feel more spiritual

Often, individuals who have gotten tattooed experience tattoo regret afterward, wishing that they had never gone under the tattoo needle and permanently marked their skin.

DESECRATION OF THE FLESH

Scripture declares that man is created in God’s image (Genesis 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 11:7). To desecrate the human body with a tattoo(s) is to disrespect ‘God's image’ and to disrespect God's image is to disrespect God.

A tattoo is a desecration of the flesh, forbidden by YHWH (the Lord). Our bodies are not canvasses for tattoo artists. There should be no graffiti found on the human body. Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.

Tattoos are images upon the flesh. Yeshua (Jesus) commands us to not print any image representing Him, in remembrance of Him, in remembrance of a deceased loved one, or any other tattoo image to mark the human body.

Tattooing the body rejects the human image to reflect 'art.' In some rare cases, people have taken tattooing to the extreme. Some mentally disturbed tattooed persons have completely rejected their image as being the image of God to become the image of God's creation (animals). There are people who have donned tattoos from head to toe in an attempt to reflect the image of an animal and in some extreme cases they even live out their lives emulating animals. This is certainly a form of rejecting the Creator and worshiping the creature (Romans 1:24-25).

Believers should be examples of clean proper living and a light of wisdom to the world. It is difficult, if not impossible, to project an image of righteousness and wholesomeness as a tattooed believer. When someone desecrates his or her flesh with a tattoo, it is practically an advertisement of promiscuity, rebelliousness, unclean, and unhealthy living.

In many cases, having a tattoo in a visible area will reduce a person's employability. Employers often won't hire a tattooed person because they want their employees to project a clean-cut professional image that reflects their company or organization.

If a person received a tattoo before turning to YHWH (the Lord) in repentance and obedience, a question arises as to what should be done with regard to already tattooed skin. Scripture does not address removing tattoos specifically, so a remedial path, if any, must be given some thought.

Tattooed skin is imaged skin. Scripture does command God's followers to destroy all types of images (Exodus 23:24, 34:13, Deuteronomy 7:5,25, 12:3; 2 Samuel 5:21; 2 Kings 10:26, 11:18, 18:4, 23:14,24, 2 Chronicles 14:3-5, 23:17, 31:1, 34:3-7).

Tattooing, while permanent, is not an unforgivable sin. So the first step any tattooed sinner should take is to pray for forgiveness. It is clear that God does not want any image marks printed on our skin, so it is a worthwhile endeavor to remove all ink marks from our skin. As an act of repentance, it is advisable to consult with a certified tattoo removal specialist who can use laser technology to permanently remove tattoos. There are also some tattoo removal creams that have recently become commercially available. It would be preferable for believers to stand resurrected before YHWH (the Lord) one day with tattoos removed from their flesh, than to stand before YHWH (the Lord) with tattoos still upon their flesh.

Ear lobe and other body piercing could be considered 'cuttings' of the flesh (Leviticus 19:28; Deuteronomy 14:1). Many believers might balk at the notion that having pierced ear lobes adorned with jewelry is sinful in nature, but to pierce the ear lobes you must cut into flesh.

Scripture does mention instances of ear piercing when a servant wished to become a permanent bondservant to his master (Exodus 21:6; Deuteronomy 15:17). The adorning of jewelry for the ears is noted in the Scripture (Genesis 35:4; Exodus 32:2-3, 35:22; Numbers 31:50; Judges 8:24-26; Ezekiel 16:12; Hosea 2:13). Nose jewelry is also noted in Scripture (Exodus 35:22; Ezekiel 16:12). Earrings were said to be 'in the ears' (Genesis 35:4; Exodus 32:2-3) which indicates that flesh piercing was common in Tanakh (Old Testament) times.

Piercing of the flesh, like tattooing, has been taken to further lengths with some people. What began as fashionably acceptable ear and nose piercing has led to many other forms of piercing. It is not that uncommon to see pierced belly button navels, eyebrows, lips, tongues, nipples, and genitalia. More extreme people have had horns implanted into their foreheads or scalps, have braided and branded their skin, and have mutilated many other parts of their flesh.

The risk of getting an infection with a body piercing is high. When pierced skin is fresh and exposed, it is susceptible to the invasion of microorganisms such as bacteria and fungi.

Believers are commanded to refrain from tattooing, skin piercing, cutting, branding, and all other desecrations and mutilations of their flesh.