

# Tattoos

*(To those who have reacted negatively to this message and question why I wrote it: If I have written this for any other reason than the love of Jesus for you stirring within my heart, then I deserve your consternation. But if I have written this being moved by God's love for you and the fear of God for you, then I hope and pray you will receive His love and His fear with a tender heart... even if the message initially appears offensive to you or if the vessel in which it is conveyed to you is just a useless jar of clay.)*

## Preparing to hear what God is saying...

To understand the heart of God concerning just about anything, we have to draw near to God and ask Him to help us understand His thoughts. We must look at the Old and New Testaments and compare all of His thoughts in Scripture. Some of the things found in the Old Testament have been fulfilled in Jesus, yet some remain and are reinforced and/or further revealed in the New Testament.

To make sense of such things, we must prepare our hearts to hunger and thirst for the heart of God more than life itself; to receive the mind of Christ; to know the will & intention & desires of God. Jesus said, "My sheep hear My Voice"; let's open our hearts to hear the Voice of Jesus. This involves *yielding* to God and being willing to *obey* Him no matter what we discover His will and intention to be.

Of course, if one does not accept the Lordship of Jesus Christ (i.e. that He will have the last say in all things-- including our very selves) it is pretty obvious that that one will not accept His commands. So obedience is a good practical indicator of the state of our love for God and the nature of our relationship with Him. (Or lack thereof?)

As Jesus said... "If you love Me, you will obey what I command." John 14.15

Merely having a *willingness to obey* is a huge factor in understanding God's thoughts and ways.

## Is the Old Testament still relevant, or can we just throw the whole thing away and only have the New Testament?

Leviticus 19 begins with an overarching assertion that: God is holy (set apart) and God's people must also be holy (set apart). See Leviticus 19.2. To be set apart means to be "unlike" other things. If the Old Testament says to "be holy" then what does the New Testament say?

The apostle Peter asserts in 1 Peter 1.15,16: "but as He Who called you is holy (set apart), you also be holy (set apart) in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy for I am holy'".

Clearly not everything in Leviticus 19 can be discarded as "old" or "irrelevant". Just read through the chapter. As you read each verse, ask yourself, "Did Jesus fulfill that anywhere in the New Testament?" Consider what God is saying there. For example He commands things like, "help the poor and the stranger by leaving some gleanings in the field". He also commands things such as: "do not steal"; "do not mistreat deaf or blind people"; "do not turn your daughter into a prostitute"; "do not consult mediums and familiar (demonic) spirits"; "be kind to strangers"; "don't cheat people by using inaccurate measurements". Most people would say that all these things make sense, and that Jesus' reinforced such things when He commanded: "love your neighbor as yourself" and "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." We can't indiscriminately throw the whole thing out as "old" or "the Law" or "irrelevant". All Scripture is God-breathed and very relevant.

## So what about the human body?

Chapter 19 of Leviticus is where we find the first commandment concerning intentionally cutting and tattooing the human body.

In Leviticus 19.28 God asserts that He does not want His people to make cuttings or tattoo marks on their bodies:

### Leviticus 19.28

You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the LORD.

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Leviticus%2019:28&version=50>

Can we just discard this commandment as irrelevant or outdated merely because it exists in the Old Testament? If nothing else, we can at least conclude that **at some point in time** God clearly did not want marks, cuts, tattoos to be intentionally engraved into the human body.

### **But why?**

In the New Testament, we discover that God's intention for the human body is even greater than we imagined. In the New Testament, the human body is revealed to be the very **Temple of God Himself**.

If God dwells in a human temple-body, then it makes sense that He would have deliberate ideas about how His temple is decorated and viewed; how it appears – the message it conveys – both to Himself and others. The body literally defines His property lines. And the signs that are permanently etched into the walls of His home – or lack thereof – represent the Resident (i.e. God) inside His home.

So the answer is that God's temple is very important to Him. He even says that "if anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him." To destroy something is not simply to make it "not exist". Let's say you purchased an amazing new car that has the exact look and feel that you've always wanted. Then imagine that some neighborhood teenagers came along and spray painted your car 20 random colors and poked holes in the roof and dented the body of the car. That car belonged to you, it was very important to you, and it was just the way you wanted it. Now the neighborhood teenagers have changed it -- have destroyed it. Its value has plummeted and, if it can be repaired, it will be at a *very great cost*.

Jesus referred to the Temple of God saying "destroy this temple and I will raise it up in three days". He was, of course, referring to His body, the Temple of God, crucified on the cross, buried in a grave for three days, and then raised from the dead by His Heavenly Father. In the book of Acts it says, "God does not dwell in temples made with hands".

Neither does God decorate His temple with tattoos made with the hands of men.

You can be sure that Jesus never received a tattoo on His body. However, you *will* find marks permanently etched into His body... nail and spear scars. These marks were received through suffering love, laying down His life for you and me.

In the end, Jesus makes it clear that He Himself will adorn His temple by writing His Name on it. That will be such an amazing thing. I am humbled and delighted at the thought of it. That God Himself would write His new Name on me!

*"He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name." Revelation 3.12*

God is not merely saying "No" to tattoos or body markings. God is saying "Yes" to something so much greater if we will only soften our hearts and enter in. He is holding out the invitation to each one of us to fall in love with Him, so to speak, and invite Him into our hearts to make His home with us and make us holy (set apart) temples of God. (see John 14.23)

On the other hand, if we choose to rebel against God in our hearts and practice disobeying His commands and discarding His thoughts and values, then we are on a collision course with God:

#### **Ecclesiastes 12.13,14**

"Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil."

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ecclesiastes%2012:13-14;&version=50>

### **Scripture References:**

***Those who would call themselves followers of Jesus must submit to the Lordship of Jesus and obey Him. If Jesus is not our Lord, He is not our Savior. Lord means that***

***Jesus will have the last say in all things concerning us. He can command us and we will gladly obey...***

**Philippians 2:9-11**

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him [Jesus] and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%202:9-11%20;&version=50>

**John 14:15**

If you love Me, keep My commandments.

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2014.15;&version=50>

**John 14:21**

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2014:21;&version=50>

**Ecclesiastes 12.13,14**

“Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.”

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ecclesiastes%2012:13-14;&version=50>

***Our bodies do not belong to us...***

**Psalms 100.3**

Know that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

[http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?book\\_id=23&chapter=100&verse=3&version=50](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?book_id=23&chapter=100&verse=3&version=50)

**1 Corinthians 3.17**

If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

[http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?book\\_id=53&chapter=3&verse=17&version=50](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?book_id=53&chapter=3&verse=17&version=50)

**1 Corinthians 6.19-20**

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%206:19-20%20&version=50>

***There is nothing positive in Scripture about men marking/cutting the human body...***

**Leviticus 19:28**

You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the LORD.

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Leviticus%2019:28%20&version=50>

**1 Kings 18:26-29 (see v.28)**

So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, “O Baal, hear us!” But there was no voice; no one answered. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made. And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, “Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened.” So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them. And when midday was past, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention.

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Kings%2018.26-29;&version=50>

[also see Jeremiah 16.6]

***An altar is a place of dying and giving a life to God. How much great than an altar is the Temple of God!***

**Exodus 20:25**

And if you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone; for if you use your tool on it, you have profaned it.

[http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?book\\_id=2&chapter=20&verse=25&version=50](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?book_id=2&chapter=20&verse=25&version=50)

**Deuteronomy 27:5**

And there you shall build an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones; you shall not use an iron tool on them.

[http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?book\\_id=5&chapter=27&verse=5&version=50](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?book_id=5&chapter=27&verse=5&version=50)

**Acts 17.24**

God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2017:24&version=50>

**Joshua 8:31**

...as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses: "an altar of whole stones over which no man has wielded an iron tool." And they offered on it burnt offerings to the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings.

[http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?book\\_id=6&chapter=8&verse=31&version=50](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?book_id=6&chapter=8&verse=31&version=50)

***I look forward to the day when Jesus Himself writes on me! :-)***

**Revelation 3:12**

He who overcomes, I [Jesus] will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.

[http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?book\\_id=73&chapter=3&verse=12&version=50](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?book_id=73&chapter=3&verse=12&version=50)

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See also:

**CNN: Tattoo remorse fuels boom for dermatologists**

<http://www.cnn.com/2007/HEALTH/09/10/hm.tattoo.removal/index.html>

**Mayo Clinic: Tattoos: Risks and precautions to know first**

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/tattoos-and-piercings/MC00020>