



QA: Is It Wrong to Get Tattoos? by [John T Polk II](#)

All Scriptures and comments are based on the **New King James Version**, unless otherwise noted.

QUESTION: Is it wrong to get tattoos? - August, 2018

ANSWER: Though **we are no longer under the Law of Moses**, it is "written for our learning" (**Romans 15:4**). **God was very specific to associate "tattoos" with idolatrous superstitions** in **Leviticus 19:26-28**:

[1] "You shall not *eat anything with the blood*, [2] nor shall you *practice divination* or soothsaying. [3] You shall not *shave around the sides of your head*, nor shall you disfigure the edges of your beard. [4] You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, *nor tattoo any marks on you*: I am the LORD."

1. Those who invent their own gods (idolaters) have no respect for life, as God's people always have. "Only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life; you may not eat the life with the meat" (**Deuteronomy 12:23**). This is still God's rule:

For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell. (**Acts 15:28-29**)

2. These were attempts to falsely reach beyond what God said for empowering information. When Barnabas & Paul preached the Word of God to Sergius Paulus, Elymas, the sorcerer "withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith." (**Acts 13:6-8**)
3. Special haircuts are often associated with false religions, i.e., Hindu jata, Catholic tonsure, Sikh kesh, Jewish Pe'ot, Buddhist pabbajja, Rastafari dreadlocks, and Navajo hair. These would have been forbidden under the Old Law.
4. Scarring the body as a pain punishment for dead people, or tattoos (permanent body pictures) memorializing fantasies or life, itself, was not to be acceptable among God's people. Brother Burton Coffman wrote:

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. Certain gods had their logo inscribed upon their followers; and Paul made indirect mention of this in the Lord Jesus. At the time Paul wrote, the worshippers of pagan gods actually

were literally branded with the symbol of their false deity. For example, 'The mark of the pagan god Dionysius was that of an ivy leaf burned into the flesh with a branding iron. ^[21] However, as the beloved McGarvey put it, 'The marks of Paul that branded him as a slave of Jesus were the deep cuts of the lictor's rods of Philippi and the stones of Lystra.'^[22] *Christians generally disapprove of tattooing, despite the fact of the widespread use of it by many even today*" (Coffman's **Commentary on Leviticus**).

Paul's "marks of the Lord Jesus" (**Galatians 6:17**) refer not to tattoos, but the scars (Greek *stigmata*) of persecution and punishment he has had to endure on behalf of Christ (**2 Corinthians 11:23-28**).

--- John T. Polk II, August 12, 2018