



EUROPEAN-AMERICAN EVANGELISTIC CRUSADES

We received the following email on the subject of the Tattoos and the Bible's authority. It is especially relevant since the views expressed by this person are representative of the many young people in the world today and how they view tattoos in the light of Scripture.

Hello. I hope someone actually reads this.

My comment is about your articles on tattooing, and what's written in Leviticus 19:28. My boyfriend wanted to get a tattoo, and I was doing some research on the subject when I came across this. I'd like to state that I am Christian, and very devoted to my faith, but I found myself questioning the truth in this article. I found another opinion, from an historian who writes for National Geographic. Given, this writer may not be Christian, but he seems to have his historical facts down.

This was from About.com:

"A true translation of Leviticus 19:28 could never have mentioned the word "tattoo". Tattoo is a Polynesian word that entered the English language after the voyages of Capt. Cook to Tahiti in the 18th century, which is when tattooing became popular again in the West.

I have done a great deal of research into this subject as the host, writer and producer of a documentary series, The Vanishing Tattoo, on tattooing for National Geographic.

It is widely accepted among Biblical scholars that Leviticus 19:28 referred solely to the practise of people cutting themselves and rubbing in ash when in a period of mourning. The ash rubbed into wounds left permanent marks, the marks referred to in Leviticus 19:28."

Isn't this what they mean by "for the dead"? So, "for the dead" wouldn't actually apply to tattoos as we know them today.

Please don't think I'm one of those people "running miles" to go around the Word of God. I honestly would just like to know your take on this. I'd love it if you would get back to me.

Thank you for your time!

-Anonymous

Hi Anonymous,

Since you indicated that you would like an honest answer, rather than just trying to give you a quick answer, I have taken the time to answer your concerns. I want you to know that I am not attacking you; my words may seem harsh, but that is not my intention, since I am responding to you in love by giving you the truth. In this day and age with internet, there is an abundance of knowledge, but a scarcity for real truth. The truth is always the truth and it is not always what we want to hear, but what follows hereafter is the truth because it comes straight from the Bible. I say this because I believe in the Bible; I believe that it is an absolute truth that has not changed from the time God inspired men to write down His words until now when I hold it in my hands. God himself has promised to preserve His words forever, not just the general meaning or story, but word for word.

Psalms 12:6-7

6. The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.
7. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

The tattoo article which you are questioning, *To Tattoo or Not To Tattoo*¹ is documented extensively with much source material coming from secular publications but also using scripture as well. What I find disturbing though is that you doubt the truth brought out by the Bible? Why would you doubt the authority of the Bible? As such, before I can answer your questions, I feel that I need to establish the authority of the Bible.

You see, God knew that when men sat and wrote down His inspired words on paper, the original copies would not and could not exist forever; furthermore, it was not His intention that the original should exist forever but only that the text from the original would be preserved forever. This is all important because that is the main difference between the King James Bible and all the other versions which say that they are God's Word. In both instances, you and I are faced with a written language that we cannot read and therefore are in need of a translator.

The translators of the King James Bible did their best to translate the words as directly as possible, leaving it up to you and me to read the text carefully, at times having to study history in order to learn the cultural background before fully understanding the text. The King James text has simply been rendered in our language, and we have the confidence of knowing that we do not have to trust another man's understanding or theology, but can make up our minds as to what God is trying to tell us in a particular passage of scripture. In the English language, the King James Bible is the only Bible available that has been translated using this approach called formal equivalency.

¹ <http://www.eaec.org/bibleanswers/tattoo/intro.htm>

The translators of the other Bible versions chose to only use 44 of the 5,366 manuscripts that are available, and the 44 – all of which are from Alexandria – contradict each other. This is in stark contrast to the other 5,322 manuscripts from Antioch that the King James Bible is based upon, and unlike the Alexandrian manuscripts, all the manuscripts from Antioch agree with each other. So here are these modern translators working with manuscripts that oppose each other, and then another problem surfaces. Unlike the King James translators who used formal equivalency, these modern translators are using a method called dynamic equivalency. This is how it works: when a passage of scripture seems difficult to understand, the modern translator will change it in order to make it easier for you to understand. You will never know for sure what God said since you must trust the translator's theology and knowledge of the scripture to lead you into truth. The translator is acting as a teacher, not just telling you what God said, but adding his understanding of what God meant!

The translator/teacher is just a man, and can make mistakes. Since the Bible is the source for all truth (i.e. Plan of Salvation), it's vital to know exactly what God has said! If the Bible in your hand doesn't give you God's Word, but a teacher's explanation of God's intent, what can you do? What is the final authority? There is no authority you can trust. This is just one of the reasons why the King James Bible is the superior English translation in the world today, it uses formal equivalency. The translators were determined not to tell you God's intent, but just convey to you His words! That is the difference between a translator and a teacher; it is the translator's job to tell you what God said and it is the teacher's job to tell you how to understand and apply it to your life. That is why I always insist on a Bible that will give me the purity of God's Word, so that I have an absolute upon which to judge everything else.

Now there are many Christians today that will say that we cannot even trust the King James Bible since it was not translated from the original manuscripts but from copies of copies and so on. The Bible will alleviate any reservations you might have about this, as brought out by Samuel Gipp in *The Answer Book*.²

QUESTION: Shouldn't we be loyal to the "original autographs" and not a mere translation?

ANSWER: We should put as much value on the "originals" as God does.

EXPLANATION: It is impossible to be true to the originals because the originals have long been lost. This **well established fact** should be enough to make the sincere student of Scripture realize that an affirmative answer to the question is an impossibility.

But it does not explain the above answer. Just how much value **does** God put on the originals?

To get the answer we must explore several chapters in the book of Jeremiah beginning with the famous passage in chapter 36 concerning the roll that

² http://www.eaec.org/bibleversions/answer_book/toc.htm

Jeremiah had written.

In verse 21 the roll is brought before King Jehoiakim and read by his servant Jehudi.

According to verse 23 Jehudi read three or four leaves and King Jehoiakim cut it up with a penknife and cast it into the fire on the hearth until it was destroyed.

Thus ends ORIGINAL #1!

Then the Lord moved Jeremiah to rewrite the roll adding some words to it. (Jeremiah 36:32)

Thus ORIGINAL #2 is born.

We are shown the text of this second original in Jeremiah 45-51 where it is reproduced for our benefit.

Jeremiah told Seraiah to read this roll when he came into Babylon. (Jeremiah 51:59-61) Then Jeremiah instructed Seraiah, after he finished reading the roll, to **bind a stone to it and cast it into the Euphrates river** (Jeremiah 51:63)!

Thus ends ORIGINAL #2!

But wait! We have a copy of the text of the roll in chapters 45-51. Where did it come from? It came from a **copy** of original #2, which we can only call ORIGINAL #3!

So there are two very big problems for those who overemphasize the "originals".

(1) Every Bible ever printed with a copy of Jeremiah in it has a text in chapters 45-51 which is translated from a copy of the "second" original, or ORIGINAL #3.

(2) Secondly, NO ONE can overlook the fact that God didn't have the **least** bit of interest in **preserving** the "original" once it had been copied and its message delivered. So WHY should we put more of an emphasis on the originals than **God** does? An emphasis which is **plainly** unscriptural.

Thus, since we have the text of the "originals" preserved in the King James Bible we have no need of the originals, even if they **were** available.

As you can see, since we have the text of the originals preserved in the King James Bible, we need only to read it in order to find the answer we are seeking regarding tattoos. The Bible is not just truth, it is real truth, and reveals exactly what God's thoughts are regarding tattoos. Since I am confident that the Bible which I hold in my hand is indeed the Word of God, let's look at the scripture in question which deals with tattoos.

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.

The sentence starts off with "You shall not" and ends with "print any marks upon you". Reading the Bible literally, it seems pretty straightforward but there are

many who will interject, saying that it only applies when you're doing it for the dead. With that in mind, let look further into the Bible to see how we are to treat our body. Since we are the creature and God is our Creator, what does God expect from us in how we are to treat our bodies? Let's read what the apostle Paul had to say on this subject:

1 Corinthians 3:16-17

16. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the *Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*

17. If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

As Christians, God considers our bodies to be temples in which the Holy Spirit dwells; He wants us to be holy and to take care of the body which He has provided for us. When we choose to smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, use drugs, have sex outside of marriage or even tattoo our bodies, it grieves the Holy Spirit who lives inside of us as it says in verse 16. Paul continues to expound upon this point as he quotes from Genesis 2:24, saying that if we are joined to Christ, then what have we to do with sin?

1 Corinthians 6:15-20

15. Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.

16. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

17. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

18. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but **he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.**

19. 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?

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

We aren't supposed to be Christian's in name only, but also in the way we act. We take our name from Christ as followers of Him. Therefore, if we are His followers, shouldn't we be obedient to His commandments? After all, Jesus is Lord; He was God in the Old Testament, New Testament, and even now. Since Jesus is the author of the Bible, and we claim to be followers of Him, shouldn't we also be obedient to His commandments too?

John 14:12-17

12. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

13. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

14. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

15. If ye love me, keep my commandments.

16. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

17. Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

Jesus says that when we worship God, we must do it in "*spirit and in truth*" because that is how our heavenly Father wants us to do it.

John 4:23-24

23. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the **true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.**

24. God is a Spirit: and **they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.**

So if you reject a portion of the Bible (truth), how can you worship the Father in "*spirit and in truth*," when in reality, all that you're doing is worshiping in "*spirit*" only? Jesus said that if we loved Him, we would keep His commandments (John 14:15). Therefore, wouldn't a true measure of our love for Him would be how well we keep His commandments?

John 14:21-24

21. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

22. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

23. Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

24. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

The Bible is a book of truth that man could not write if he would and would not write if he could. Towards this one book, he has shown the most intense hatred,

revealing a determination to get rid of such a scathing indictment of his own depraved condition. The opposition to the Word of God is born of the fact that the Bible reveals man's sin, discounts his wisdom, makes his greatest might to seem puny, and lays his pride in the dust. Every engine of destruction of human wisdom, human science, human philosophy, human wit, human satire, and human brutality has been brought to bear against the Bible - and it still stands! The Bible has been under attack by Satan since he uttered those famous words to Eve, "Yea, *hath God said?*" As such, Satan still is making every attempt to destroy the Word of God.

I would like to point out that only God has the legal right to mark bodies, after all, He is the legal owner! I am going to show you four other instances in the Bible where it speaks of marking the body.

- ❑ God set a mark upon Cain so that anyone who saw him would know not to kill him.

Genesis 4:13-15

13. And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

14. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.

15. And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And **the LORD set a mark upon Cain**, lest any finding him should kill him.

- ❑ An angel marked the men in Jerusalem who were to be spared from the judgment of the Lord.

Ezekiel 9:1-6

1. He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand.

2. And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brasen altar.

3. And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side;

4. And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and **set a mark upon the foreheads of the men** that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

5. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity:
6. **Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark;** and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house.

- ☐ The angels will seal God's people with a mark in their foreheads.

Revelation 7:1-4

1. And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.
2. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,
3. Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have **sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.**
4. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

- ☐ In the future, Satan's man (the antichrist) will impose an illegal mark of loyalty which will be rejected by God.

Revelation 13:16-18

16. 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:**
17. 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.
18. 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.

To tattoo or not tattoo is not the question, but rather, am I going to be obedient to God's Word? Tattoos represent two things, rebellion against God, and conformity to the masses in the world. God has clearly stated in the Bible that men and women are not to mutilate the skin of their bodies (Leviticus 19:28). Demon oppressed Christians are trying to eliminate verse 28 by incorrectly quoting the verse 27, which says you are not supposed to trim your hair or beard. Verse 27, 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.

Tattoos and body piercing are now preparing people for the mark of the Beast; this is what the Bible has to say about those who take Satan's mark:

Revelation 14:9-12

9. And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, **If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,**
10. **The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:**
11. **And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.**
12. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

If you want to say that tattoos are fine as long as they're applied with needle and ink versus a knife and ash, that is simply bad doctrine, in fact it stinks of demonic influence (1 Timothy 4:1). It really doesn't matter how the tattoo is applied, all we need to know that God condemns it in any application. Any backslidden Christian wanting to get around "You shall not" will have to make the scripture imply something that was not intended or invalidate it. The Bible says that we are not mark our bodies for any reason, not even as a witnessing tool!

Regarding the response to tattoos that you quoted on about.com, here is what Vince Hemingson had to say on the subject:

"A true translation of Leviticus 19:28 could never have mentioned the word "tattoo". Tattoo is a Polynesian word that entered the English language after the voyages of Capt. Cook to Tahiti in the 18th century. Which is when tattooing became popular again in the West.

I have done a great deal of research into this subject as the host, writer and producer of a documentary series, The Vanishing Tattoo, on tattooing for National Geographic.

*It is widely accepted among Biblical scholars that Leviticus 19:28 referred solely to the practise of people cutting themselves and rubbing in ash when in a period of mourning. The ash rubbed into wounds left permanent marks, the marks referred to in Leviticus 19:28."*³

If Hemingson were indeed as knowledgeable as he claims, he would know that the King James Bible was finished in the 17th century, specifically in the year 1611. Hemingson says the word came from the Polynesian language and was incorporated into the English language in the 18th century. Do you see a discrepancy here? How can a word, which supposedly derived its origin from the Polynesian language, be used in an English bible some one hundred years earlier before the Polynesian language was even discovered? The answer is

³ http://christianteens.about.com/cs/christianadvice/a/tattooresponse_5.htm

quite simple, the Bible manuscripts had it all along, and the translators did their job in properly translating Leviticus 19:28!

Hemingson summarizes his defense of tattoos by saying:

"It is widely accepted among Biblical scholars that Leviticus 19:28 referred solely to the practise of people cutting themselves and rubbing in ash when in a period of mourning."

It was the custom of those who served idol gods in ancient times to imprint upon themselves the mark of an idol to show that they were his servants. It's not that hard to understand, the tattoo was a mark of loyalty to the demon god! Where in the Bible does it command us to do the same? Why would God give His stamp of approval on tattoos as long as it is not for the dead? This would completely invalidate the scripture as long as your motive is pure, since you're not doing it *"in a period of mourning?"* That logic contradicts many other scripture passages! Given all that has been previously said, the answer must be a resounding NO!

In the Gospel of John, Jesus says that when we worship God, we must do it in *"spirit and in truth"* because that is the way our heavenly Father wants us to do it.

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. John 4:23-24

If you reject a portion of the Bible, how can you worship the Father in *"spirit and in truth,"* when in reality, all that you're doing is worshiping in *"spirit"* only? Jesus said that if we loved Him, we would keep His commandments (John 14:15). Jesus sums it beautifully, look at the following verses:

John 14:21-24

25. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

26. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

27. Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

28. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

May God open your spiritual eyes,

Charles Thorell