

## The Dark Side of Tattoos

Written by William M. Sudduth Sr.  
Thursday, 31 December 2009 02:08 PM EST

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*Today it's fashionable to get as much permanent ink on your skin as possible. Is this a healthy trend?*

I had never given the subject of tattoos much thought other than occasionally to regret getting mine—until my wife, Janet, and I were ministering in New Zealand in 2003. New Zealand was settled more than 1,000 years ago by a primitive Polynesian people called the Maori. They were headhunters and cannibals who worshiped demon gods. The Maori tattoo most of their bodies, including their faces, which they carve flesh from as a wood carver would etch wood to create a design. Then they apply ink.

On a day off we went sightseeing with a local pastor. He took us to a Maori village. Inside the entrance of the village was a meeting house, and above the entrance was a statue of a demon, the face of which was carved with the same pattern as the men's faces. I immediately came to the realization that these people had carved their faces to look like the deity they worshiped.

The Lord spoke very clearly to me to study every people group, not just the Maori, and then write a book. As a result, I spent nearly two years researching the origins and history of tattoos

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and piercing. I studied Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, Europeans, Mid-Easterners, Asians and Africans in my research.

### MARKED BY GOD

"Yes, I have tattoos. Please don't judge me before you know why I wear them."- Aaron Cannistraci

I discovered that all primitive pagan cultures throughout history and on every

continent subscribed to some form of body modification or mutilation, usually involving tattoos and/or piercing. In most cases the practice was a part of demon worship. Many groups such as the Maori tattooed themselves to look like the demons to gain acceptance and power from them.

In 1991 hikers in Europe found the frozen, well-preserved body of an "Alpine Iceman." More than 5,000 years old, he is the oldest frozen mummy ever discovered. He was found with a grass cape, a copper axe, a quiver full of arrows, flint for making fire, and numerous tattoos on his body, including a cross on the inside of the left knee. (It was not a so-called "Christian tattoo.") He had six straight lines 15 centimeters long above the kidneys, and numerous parallel lines on the ankles.

Subsequent X-rays of his body revealed chronic degeneration of bone and cartilage in the spine and arthritic wear and tear of the knees and ankles. Presumably these tattoos were done by a shaman or medicine man who was invoking the gods on behalf of this man to rid his body of pain.

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In 1891, archaeologists discovered the 4,000-year-old mummy of an Egyptian priestess of Hathor—the Egyptian goddess of love. She had parallel lines tattooed on her arms and thighs as well as an elliptical design below her navel. The tattoo below her navel is believed to have had sexual connotations linked to fertility.

Headhunters such as the Maori from the Philippines, Taiwan and other Pacific islands tattooed themselves to appease the gods before the headhunt and to commemorate their success afterward. South American headhunters also used tattoos as part of their rituals. The Hawaiians have actual tattoo gods they consult before doing a tattoo. The Chinese and Japanese used tattoos to ward off evil spirits, to appease different gods and, like the Romans, to identify or “brand” criminals. Roman slaves were tattooed as a sign of ownership, often marked, “Tax Paid.”

Native Americans tattooed themselves and their captives. The Inuit tattooed themselves upon arriving in the cold arctic regions to appease the gods so they would allow them to settle there and survive in the harsh climate.

In the Mideast, Babylonian and Canaanite and Hebrew shrine prostitutes tattooed themselves as part of their worship. Baal worshipers wore tattoos on their hands to gain power from Baal. In India, shrine prostitutes tattooed themselves to look like the various gods they worshiped. In primitive areas of India the wife of the village sorcerer is the tattoo artist.

Because of their dark skin, black Africans didn't use tattoos as much as they used scarification. This involves cutting the skin with a sharp instrument and then rubbing it with ashes or caustic plant juices that form permanent blisters. Dark pigments, such as charcoal or gunpowder, are then rubbed into the wound to provide emphasis. The wounds are periodically reopened to enhance the raised scar effect.

Other African traditions involve extreme forms of body piercing. Lips and ears are pierced and objects implanted inside, causing the lip or ear tissue to elongate and conform to the shape of the object. Ethiopian women wear a lip plate, which causes the mouth to protrude to resemble the beak of the spoonbill, a creature they worship.

The letting of blood and body modification have always been associated with pagan worship

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and witchcraft. Pagans and Christians alike know there is power in the blood. In spite of the current interest in tattoos even in the church, all research points to one conclusion: The root of tattooing never changes; it is, and always has been, a pagan spiritual activity.

### SHOULD YOU TATTOO?

Some Christians say it's [OK to have tattoos. What do you think?](#) Should Christians get tattoos?

### Your Body Is a Temple

During the last 11 years Janet and I have been heavily involved in the ministry of deliverance. We have ministered to multiplied thousands of people in individual and group settings. We have dealt with people from all walks of life, from many different nations and races. We have ministered to the depressed, the oppressed and even the possessed. We have seen countless people who have been negatively impacted by the spirit realm as a result of things they have done or things that have happened to them.

The goal of our deliverance teaching is always to impart a greater understanding of the spirit realm. Believers need to know how it affects them and to be aware that everything we do in the natural has a spiritual consequence, including the marking or piercing of our bodies.

It's not surprising that Satan and his demon spirits are doing what they have always done, trying to gain man's attention, affection and worship. In my research I found that in every culture tattoos were used as a means of invoking, appeasing or glorifying demon gods. Satan is still seeking to take man's focus off God and direct it to himself.

Today in our culture and society we see an explosion of fads such as tattoos and piercings. Though I don't fully understand it, Satan is attempting to mark as many people as he can through these means. Perhaps on the day of judgment the accuser of the brethren, the devil, will stand before God and try to claim those so marked as his own.

Or perhaps Satan is encouraging people of all cultures to mar their bodies through some form

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of mutilation because he knows we are made in God's image, and he hates God and anything that resembles God.

When I minister, I often ask people if they have ever played Monopoly. If they have, I ask whether they have ever gotten into a family feud while playing and have had to get out the rule book. People laugh as they recall digging out the rules.

God has given us a rule book, a set of rules to play by that enables us to win this game of life. We call it the Bible. The Bible was given to us to help us and to protect us from harm. It clearly teaches us the wiles and schemes of the devil.

Leviticus 19:28 gives us the "rule" for tattoos. It says, ""You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the Lord"" (NKJV).

When God first gave this command to the Israelites, He was drawing a line of demarcation between His chosen people and the Egyptians, whose land they had just left, and the Canaanites, whose land they were about to enter. Both of these cultures were steeped in witchcraft and the occult. Both openly worshiped and served demon gods, and both used tattoos as part of their idolatry and pagan worship. God was trying to protect the Israelites from opening themselves up to demonic influence.

We too are God's people, and He wants us to "come out from among them" (2 Cor. 6:17). He wants us to separate ourselves from the world and the world's fads. When we do that, we will avoid doing things to our bodies that God never intended us to do—and that includes getting tattoos.

Let me make it clear that there is absolutely no such thing as a Christian tattoo. In fact, the mere term "Christian tattoo" is an oxymoron! A tattoo may be a religious symbol, but there is nothing Christian about it.

If we truly belong to Christ, we should know and understand that our bodies are not our own. Engaging in the practice of body modification indicates that we believe the opposite. Yet the

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Bible clearly tells us: "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" (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

*Rolling Stone* magazine quoted famous tattoo artist Paul Booth as saying that while he is tattooing people, "he allows his clients' demons to help guide the needle." I pray this article will prevent you or someone you know from further defiling these earthen temples we call our bodies. I pray it has given you a greater understanding of the unseen world, as well as insight into what's behind the ink.

If you already have a tattoo or piercing and are wondering what to do now that you know the truth, here are some steps you can take. First, repent to God for violating Scripture and for bloodletting, which is witchcraft. Also, repent for defiling the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Then renounce the spirits behind the tattoo or piercing. Witchcraft and rebellion are a given, but many tattoos have images that need to be addressed. Sexual tattoos may invite a spirit of perversion, a skull and cross bones a spirit of death, a religious tattoo a spirit of religion and so on. If you have a piercing in other than an ear lobe, remove it and repent for defiling your temple. And whether it's a tattoo or a piercing, anoint it with oil and break any assignment of the enemy that came in through the modification of your body.

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**William M. Sudduth Sr.** is president of Righteous Acts Ministries ([ramministry.org](http://ramministry.org)). He and his wife, Janet, host seminars on spiritual growth, deliverance training and restoring innocence as well as holding revival meetings. He is the author of *What's Behind the Ink?*, a book about the spiritual aspects of tattooing, piercing and other fads.

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[Join the very controversial debate.](#)