

Re: Tattoos are Sinful ... DeBunked! (D24)

Greetings [REDACTED]

So good to hear from you. You probably did not sign-up for such a lengthy response, but I'm taking the time for it.

First, this video is a generally good message, though I differ with it on a couple of points I would have preferred to be said differently. I wouldn't usually take the time to write about it, but I decided to be transparent with you on it.

Before I get too far, how about a personal story: I don't make a big deal over tattoos in the pulpit. A local tattoo artist in a biker gang was born-again in my church about thirty years ago. He started coming every single Sunday and became an integral part of our church, and he continued as a highly sought-after tattoo artist in our city for the next 15 to 20 years during his membership. I said nothing to him about it in all those years, but my theology is not easily mistaken for antinomianism. One Sunday night, he came to me in tears and said, "Pastor, I have been praying about this for years. I believe that it is wrong that I have tattooed thousands of people in this town for most of my life, and I'm closing it all down to follow the Lord. These marks all over my body identify with the life I left when I was born again. I wish I could remove every one of them." (Keep in mind that his body is covered from head to toe). Then he asked me this question: "Do you believe that I have heard from God and that I should give it all up?" I said, "Yes, I do." So, he sold everything and became a professional truck driver until he died a few years ago. Now I'm ministering to his grandson and great-grandchildren.

I said all that to say this: He didn't come under conviction over this issue because I'm such a strict Pharisee, but he did come to the conviction on his own because I teach and preach the law as an ongoing authority adjusted by the New Testament (not necessarily completely nullified by it as most teach). The tattoo issue is fascinating because it is *somewhat* trivial from a salvific standpoint (which is why I don't harp on it). Yet, it does invite a deeper discussion that isn't at all trivial to me, like, for example, "What should we REALLY be doing with the civil laws of the ancient Hebrews in this modern world?" My answer is not the same as the one inferred by this video, so I thought I might as well share my views with you as you wrote: "Let me know what you think."

Here's what I think. (And please don't be offended by this. I'm just sharing something I value for your consideration.)

I agree with every word regarding the "ceremonial law" no longer being binding upon the Christians. I also enjoyed the SPANC highlights but would like to suggest that it may be possible to plunge further into SPANC and reach a similar conclusion as the one your video reached toward the end, yet a conclusion that is different enough to merit some conversation.

As it stands, I would not show this video to my congregation because it might make my more important goal of restoring respect for the ancient laws of the Hebrews more difficult. Let me explain further:

Is comparing beard and hair regulations in verse 27 with the prohibition of tattoos in verse 28 a potential either/or fallacy reminiscent of what I've already been told thousands of times about the sin of Sodomy (never *directly* prohibited in the New Testament)? I think it is a potentially flawed contextual argument because it is very easily turned against us if we employ it hastily. Here is how the progressive Christians do it to me (and probably already have toward you): "Well, if you are going to take the prohibition of Sodomy from Leviticus 18, then you have to accept the 'Do not touch a dead pig' of Leviticus 11, too, and condemn Christians for playing football!" Then they all have a good laugh at my respect for promoting the Old Testament's righteous, "eternal attitude."

So while I agree with the statement regarding the ceremonial laws not being binding upon Christians, I actually *disagree* with the statement that "as Christians, we are not bound by the civil laws of the Old Covenant." My view is quite the opposite—I argue that this assumption is precisely the Western view of Scripture that created almost every problem we Christians now navigate in the modern politics and law of the United States of America.

From my soteriological and eschatological views, individual persons are judged by the continuing and eternally true standard of the moral law, AND all the nations (national systems) of this whole world will someday be judged according to the precise standard of Hebrew civic law when the King returns. So, the moral law is *STILL* binding. Civil law is *STILL* binding. Since the moral law is still binding upon individuals (the very definition of sin is the transgression of it), I required a Savior who kept it perfectly and took my just punishment for its violation, etc., etc. THEN, the logic continues; all nations are *STILL* being judged by the standard of the divine civil law, as well.

This reality bears down upon the coming commonwealth of nations Christ will rule with a rod of iron after His return, does it not? Therefore, the truth of the moral law and its implications upon each individual transcend to the truth of the civil law and its implications upon every nation, and so on and so forth. I realize this is mostly rejected by the modern church. Just last week, a poorly taught Senator Ted Cruz condemned Christianized African nations who have outlawed Sodomy with the same consequences found in the civil laws of the ancient Hebrews. He was joined by the atheist James Lindsay who added (paraphrased), "Anyone who supports the criminalization of Sodomy is not a real Christian." I can only conclude, then, that 100% of our American founding generations of pilgrims were "not real Christians" if I take either man very seriously. (I do not, but their error in judgment is certainly connected to THIS conversation and the ramifications of modern Christian theological assumptions regarding God's laws. Here is what I believe about America. America is as righteous a nation as she comports with the Old Testament civic laws and as wicked as she fails to comport with those same Old Testament civic laws.

Deuteronomy chapter 4 offers the implicit purpose of the civic laws of Israel ... to set a "righteous" example "to all the nations of the world." This plan to demonstrate proper human government built upon a permanent (not temporary) standard of justice (civic and moral laws of the Hebrews) was not done away with in Acts chapter 2 but actually taken up a notch on the Day of Pentecost. Rather than the fire resting upon the mountaintop and Moses coming down on the first Pentecost Sunday (50 days after they crossed the Red Sea) to give them the ancient foundation of "moral and civil law." In Acts 2, the fire rested upon the tops of their heads and sent *them* into all nations to carry that SAME LAW (the schoolmaster to lead the nations to Christ) into all the world. (They were so fortunate to become the voice of God to the nations through the gift of foreign tongues, etc.)

So although I am not a Presbyterian, nor am I a cessationist like my Baptist friends, I do happen to agree with the old Presbyterians on this issue of the civil laws of the ancient Hebrews in that we are making (and started making long ago) a HUGE mistake that has cost us almost everything regarding true liberty—at this point in history. We discarded the view of the Puritans, who warned us not to discard the civil laws of the Hebrews, and look what happened to us. In my opinion, the John Winthrop "City on a Hill" Puritans were *correct* regarding the laws of the Hebrews. The Ann Hutchinson "Amalgamate with the Indians" Pilgrims were *incorrect* regarding the laws of the Hebrews.

I said all that to say this: If the civil laws of the Hebrews are the standard by which all nations will someday be judged by Almighty God ... and He clearly revealed His intentions that all the nations of the world copy those same civil laws (written in Deut. 4). THEN, in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost (the Holy Day remembering the giving of that law designed to demonstrate good civil government to all the nations), the 120 persons enjoyed a personal "Mount Sinai Experience" with the fire of God settling upon THEM and SENDING them as ambassadors to all nations....

Why are we still teaching that the civil laws of the Ancient Hebrews are not binding upon us? My point is probably simpler than my long, lengthy writing. We may not know how to implement every civil law of the ancients in the modern world, but even when we can't figure that out, we ought to at least try to discern the spirit and motive behind that law and mirror it as best as possible.

So ... when God's eternal attitude declares, "Do not tattoo yourselves," is it binding upon us? Maybe it ought to be? Maybe it still is?

Is it possible that I am not bound by the dress code of the ancient Hebrews (verse 27) yet still bound by the eternal attitude for the purpose of that exact same dress code? (I believe I am.) If so, then I must *also* be bound by the *eternal attitude* of the prohibition against the tattoo of verse 28, no?

Therefore, if I can find a way to justify my New Testament tattoo, shouldn't it be done in a way that obeys the *eternal attitude* of the ancient prohibition without violating the essence of the prohibition? I don't think ANYONE can accomplish that. I confess that I do not know how to get a tattoo while honoring the spirit of the law (which is God) aback the ancient prohibition.

So, as I thought, you probably didn't sign-up for such a long, windy e-mail. You have no obligations to respond at all. You are probably very busy, but I wouldn't mind at all if you shared my thoughts with Kerby.

Other than this issue regarding the handling of the law, I have always thoroughly enjoyed all the materials that your ministry produces and will likely keep right on enjoying them and commending them to others. I appreciate what you do for the Lord.

God bless,

Pastor Cary Gordon