

Ezekiel 20:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols.

Analysis

'Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols.' The cause of judgment: despising God's law and idolatry. 'Their heart went after their idols' identifies the root problem—divided affection, misplaced worship. External rebellion (despising judgments) stems from internal idolatry (hearts after idols). God's law addresses heart orientation, not merely external conformity.

Historical Context

Wilderness idolatry included the golden calf (Exodus 32), illicit relationships with Moabite women and their gods (Numbers 25), and ongoing syncretism. Acts 7:42-43 (quoting Amos 5:25-27) indicates they carried idols throughout the wilderness period despite God's presence in the tabernacle. Heart-level rebellion persisted despite external religious observance.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What idols compete for our hearts while we maintain external religious observance?
2. How do we address heart-level idolatry rather than merely conforming externally?

Interlinear Text

לֹא	מִקְוָתִי	וְאַתָּה	מִאָסִי	בְּמִשְׁפָטִים	וְעַל	עַל	
H3808	not in my statutes	H853	and	H3988	Because they despised	H4941	my judgments
אַתָּה	כִּי	חַל	לֹא	שְׁבַתּוֹתִים	וְאַתָּה	בְּמִ	
H310	after	H2490	but polluted	H7676	my sabbaths	H853	and walked
אַתָּה	כִּי	חַל	לֹא	שְׁבַתּוֹתִים	וְאַתָּה	בְּמִ	
H310	after	H2490	but polluted	H7676	my sabbaths	H853	and walked
הָלָל:	לְבָם	גַּלְוִילִים	לְבָם	הָלָל:	לְבָם	גַּלְוִילִים	
H1980	and walked	H3820	for their heart	H1980	and walked	H1544	their idols

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 15:39 (Parallel theme): And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring:

Ezekiel 20:8 (Parallel theme): But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.

