



Daily Verse and Comment

[Ezekiel 20:16](#)

(16) because they despised My judgments and did not walk in My statutes, but profaned My Sabbaths; for their heart went after their idols.

New King James Version

In this passage, [God](#) consistently uses a word translated in the King James as "polluted" and in the New King James as "profaned." *Pollute* means "to defile." Polluted air and water are, to some degree, defiled, stained, poisoned, contaminated, foul. It can imply desecrated, violated, and profaned. *Profane* means "to treat with irreverence and disrespect." It means "to treat as common": Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday are common days of the week, whereas the [Sabbath](#) is holy. It is special, set apart.

So, what motivated these people to despise and to pollute His Sabbaths?

[Proverbs 4:23](#) reads, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life." [Jesus](#) updates this in [Matthew 15:19](#): "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, . . ." and about half a dozen other sins. Yet, just as surely as these evil things come out of the heart, so do good things.

God says through Ezekiel that the Israelites broke the Sabbath because their hearts went after their idols. Spiritually, an idol can be anything to which we give our time or attention to the detriment of our relationship with God. However, we must understand that idolatry forces a person to do *its* will rather than God's. If the heart goes after an idol, the rest of the body will follow the heart. The heart—the thinking and emotional processes—imposes its will on the hands, the eyes, the ears, the mouth, etc., and they just follow what the heart wills to do. If our hearts follow an idol, God says we will surely break the Sabbath.

The idol does not have to be the same for each person, but in relation to the Sabbath, the result is always the same: All or some part of the Sabbath day will be used as one pleases—pursuing one's own interests—rather than what God intends. This is why God says in [Isaiah 58:13](#) that we should not speak our own words on the Sabbath. When we are speaking our own words, our tongue is following after the idol. Undoubtedly, we sometimes do this ignorantly. For most of us, we know better, but our hearts are still going after our idols.

So we can reach a conclusion directly from God's own Word: Idolatry is at the foundation of Sabbath-breaking.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[Sabbathkeeping \(Part 1\)](#)



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