Ezekiel 42

Holy Chambers: The Wall Between Holy and Common

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION

"These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."
Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

God measured a line around His house and put a wall on it to separate the holy from the common. His priests ate holy food in holy rooms and changed their clothes before they went back out to the people. In a nation that had blurred every line, God was drawing the line again.

Ed Smith · Started 20 October 2026

Scripture in the text and key-verse cards: King James Version (public domain). Quotations in the notes: New American Standard Bible® (NASB 1995), © The Lockman Foundation; used by permission. Commentary sources: David Guzik, Enduring Word.

00 The Text

EZEKIEL 42 (KJV), MARKED

Gold God — His character & actions
Green Command / instruction
Sky Key repeated word
Rose Sin / warning
Violet Promise / blessing
Amber Time / place / contrast

1 Then he brought me forth into the utter court, the way toward the north: and he brought me into the chamber that was over against the separate place, and which was before the building toward the north.

2 Before the length of an hundred cubits was the north door, and the breadth was fifty cubits.

3 Over against the twenty cubits which were for the inner court, and over against the pavement which was for the utter court, was gallery against gallery in three stories.

4 And before the chambers was a walk of ten cubits breadth inward, a way of one cubit; and their doors toward the north.

5 Now the upper chambers were shorter: for the galleries were higher than these, than the lower, and than the middlemost of the building.

6 For they were in three stories, but had not pillars as the pillars of the courts: therefore the building was straitened more than the lowest and the middlemost from the ground.

7 And the wall that was without over against the chambers, toward the utter court on the forepart of the chambers, the length thereof was fifty cubits.

8 For the length of the chambers that were in the utter court was fifty cubits: and, lo, before the temple were an hundred cubits.

9 And from under these chambers was the entry on the east side, as one goeth into them from the utter court.

10 The chambers were in the thickness of the wall of the court toward the east, over against the separate place, and over against the building.

11 And the way before them was like the appearance of the chambers which were toward the north, as long as they, and as broad as they: and all their goings out were both according to their fashions, and according to their doors.

12 And according to the doors of the chambers that were toward the south was a door in the head of the way, even the way directly before the wall toward the east, as one entereth into them.

13 Then said he unto me, The north chambers and the south chambers, which are before the separate place, they be holy chambers, where the priests that approach unto the LORD shall eat the most holy things: there shall they lay the most holy things, and the meat offering, and the sin offering, and the trespass offering; for the place is holy.

14 When the priests enter therein, then shall they not go out of the holy place into the utter court, but there they shall lay their garments wherein they minister; for they are holy; and shall put on other garments, and shall approach to those things which are for the people.

15 Now when he had made an end of measuring the inner house, he brought me forth toward the gate whose prospect is toward the east, and measured it round about.

16 He measured the east side with the measuring reed, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed round about.

17 He measured the north side, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed round about.

18 He measured the south side, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed.

19 He turned about to the west side, and measured ⇄ five hundred reeds with ⇄ the measuring reed.

20 ▲ He measured it by the four sides: ◷ it had a wall round about, ⇄ five hundred reeds long, and five hundred broad, ⚠ to make a separation between the sanctuary and the profane place.

Marked in the text

- **v1** ◷ he brought me forth into the utter court
- **v1** ◷ the way toward the north
- **v3** ◷ gallery against gallery in three stories
- **v4** ⇄ chambers *(every occurrence)*
- **v13** ⇄ they be holy chambers
- **v13** ▲ the priests that approach unto the LORD
- **v13** ★ shall eat the most holy things
- **v13** ⚠ the meat offering, and the sin offering, and the trespass offering
- **v13** ▲ for the place is holy
- **v14** ▮▮ they shall lay their garments wherein they minister
- **v14** ▲ for they are holy
- **v14** ▮▮ shall put on other garments
- **v14** ▮▮ shall approach to those things which are for the people
- **v15** ◷ when he had made an end of measuring the inner house
- **v15** ◷ the gate whose prospect is toward the east
- **v16** ⇄ five hundred reeds *(every occurrence)*
- **v16** ⇄ the measuring reed *(every occurrence)*
- **v20** ▲ He measured it by the four sides
- **v20** ◷ it had a wall round about
- **v20** ⚠ to make a separation between the sanctuary and the profane place

Marks are drawn on the KJV text. Quotations in the notes are from the NASB95, so their wording may differ from the KJV above.

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 42:13 (KJV)

13 Then said he unto me, The north ⇄ chambers and the south ⇄ chambers, which are before the separate place, they be holy ⇄ chambers, where ▲ the priests that approach unto the LORD ★ shall eat the most holy things: there shall they lay the most holy things, and ⚠ the meat offering, and the sin offering, and the trespass offering; ▲ for the place is holy.

Setting

The same vision of the twenty-fifth year of the exile (40:1) continues. Ezekiel has seen the gates, the courts, the altar and the inside of the temple (chapters 40–41). Now the guide leads him back out to the priests' buildings beside the temple, and then outside the whole complex to measure its outer wall. This chapter finishes the measuring of the temple area; in the next one, the glory of God returns (43:1–5).

Structure

- vv1–9 — **the north chambers:** "Then he brought me out into the outer court" (v1), toward the north, to a block of chambers facing the separate area. They rise with "gallery corresponding to gallery in three

stories" (v3). A walkway runs in front of them (v4). The upper rooms are smaller than the lower ones (vv5–6). An entrance on the east leads in from the outer court (v9).

- vv10–12 — **the south chambers:** a matching block on the south side (v12; NASB reads "toward the east" in v10), built into the wall of the court, with the same size, exits and doors as those on the north (vv11–12).
- vv13–14 — **holy chambers for holy priests:** "The north chambers and the south chambers … they are the holy chambers where the priests who are near to the LORD shall eat the most holy things" (v13). There they lay the grain offering, the sin offering and the guilt offering, "for the place is holy" (v13). The priests leave their ministry garments there, "for they are holy," and "put on other garments" before they "approach that which is for the people" (v14).
- vv15–19 — **the outer wall measured:** "Now when he had finished measuring the inner house" (v15), the guide takes Ezekiel out by the east gate and measures each side — east, north, south, west — "five hundred reeds" (v16).
- v20 — **the purpose of the wall:** "He measured it on the four sides" (v20); it had a wall all around, five hundred long and five hundred wide, "to divide between the holy and the profane" (v20).

Repeated words

chambers (vv1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13); holy (vv13, 14, 20); measured (vv15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20); five hundred (vv16, 17, 18, 19, 20); north / south / east / west (vv1, 11, 12, 13, 16–19).

Contrasts

the holy chambers (v13) ⟷ the outer court where the people are (v14). Holy garments for ministry (v14) ⟷ other garments for going out to the people (v14). The inner house (v15) ⟷ the great outer wall (v20). The holy ⟷ the profane (v20). Before the exile priests made "no distinction between the holy and the profane" (22:26) ⟷ here a wall is built to keep that line clear.

Chapter theme (my words)

God measured a line around His house and put a wall on it to separate the holy from the common. His priests ate holy food in holy rooms and changed their clothes before they went back out to the people. In a nation that had blurred every line, God was drawing the line again.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 42:14 (KJV)

14 When the priests enter therein, then shall they not go out of the holy place into the utter court, but there they shall lay their garments wherein they minister; for they are holy; and shall put on other garments, and shall approach to those things which are for the people.

The priests' chambers (vv1–12)

Three tiers of rooms stand north and south of the temple, facing the separate area. Guzik notes the careful, ordered design: "There was nothing about this structure that was haphazard." The upper stories are smaller because the galleries take space from them. Block, in Guzik, on rooms like these: "Such storage space housed ritual equipment, votive gifts, and the revenue taken in by the temple."

Eating the most holy things (v13)

Under the Law, the priests ate their share of the grain, sin and guilt offerings in a holy place (Lev 6:16, 26; 7:6). Their portion was how God provided for them (Num 18:9–10; 1 Cor 9:13). Trapp, in Guzik: "Ministers must eat as well as others; they are not of the chameleon kind – cannot live upon the air." Guzik sees more than a paycheck in it: "This was a meal of fellowship between God and man." Block, in Guzik: "The grain offering (minha) represented a gift or tribute to deity, consisting of grain or flour."

Changing garments (v14)

The priests' ministry clothes stayed in the holy chambers. Wright, in Guzik: "The priests must wear special clothes when they are functioning as priests in the temple (Ezekiel 42:14)." Ezekiel will give the reason in chapter 44: so they do not "transmit holiness to the people with their garments" (44:19). The clothes were not magic; the point was that holy service and ordinary life must not be blurred. The priests did not hide in the holy rooms — they changed and went out to the people (v14).

The outer wall (vv15–20)

The guide goes out by the east gate and measures all four sides. The Hebrew reads five hundred "rods" (reeds); some ancient versions and modern translations read five hundred *cubits* (about 850 feet a side). Guzik takes it as rods — an area of almost a square mile — and says the support for "cubits" is "small." Alexander, in Guzik: "No good reason appears to reject the term 'rod' in these verses." Feinberg: "The entire area was much too large for Mount Moriah where Solomon's and Zerubbabel's temples stood." Guzik: "This is a large area, much larger than the present temple mount," and he connects it to the reshaping of the land in the millennial age (compare Zech 14:4, 10). Those who read the vision symbolically see in the perfect square the completeness and holiness of God's dwelling, as in the cube-shaped city of Revelation 21:16.

"To divide between the holy and the profane" (v20)

This is the point of the whole wall. Block, in Guzik: "They are not constructed to keep enemy forces out, if by these forces one means human foes of Israel." The danger was not armies but defilement. Judah's priests had erased the line (22:26), and God's glory had left (chapters 8–11). Now the line is restored so

that God can come back and dwell. Wiersbe, in Guzik, notes that this temple has no court of the Gentiles with a separating wall (compare Eph 2:14) — the separation here is between holy and common, not between Jew and Gentile. In Christ the wall of hostility between peoples is torn down, but the call to holiness is not (1 Pet 1:15–16; 2 Cor 6:16–17).

Word study (Hebrew)

- **outer — *chitson* (H2435):** outer, outward, external.
- **chamber — *lishkah* (H3957):** a room, chamber, hall.
- **gallery — *ʾattiq* (H862):** a ledge, terrace, gallery.
- **holy — *qodesh* (H6944):** holiness, a holy thing, a holy place.
- **near — *qarob* (H7138):** near, close at hand.
- **grain offering — *minchah* (H4503):** a gift, tribute, grain offering.
- **sin offering — *chattath* (H2403):** sin; a sin offering.
- **guilt offering — *ʾasham* (H817):** a trespass or guilt offering.
- **garments — *beged* (H899):** clothing, a garment.
- **minister — *sharath* (H8334):** to serve, minister.
- **reed / rod — *qaneh* (H7070):** a reed, measuring rod.
- **wall — *chomah* (H2346):** a wall of protection, a city wall.
- **divide — *badal* (H914):** to separate, make a distinction.
- **profane — *chol* (H2455):** common, ordinary, not holy.

Cross-references

Lev 6:16; Lev 6:26; Lev 10:10; Num 18:9–10; Ezek 22:26; Ezek 43:1–5; Ezek 44:19; Ezek 44:23; Zech 14:4; Zech 14:10; Zech 14:20–21; Matt 5:13–16; 1 Cor 9:13; 2 Cor 6:16–17; Eph 2:14; 1 Pet 1:15–16; 1 Pet 2:9; Rev 21:16; Rev 21:27.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 42:20 (KJV)

20 He measured it by the four sides: it had a wall round about, five hundred reeds long, and five hundred broad, to make a separation between the sanctuary and the profane place.

Command to obey — keep the line between holy and common

The wall was built "to divide between the holy and the profane" (v20). God gave His priests the same job: to teach the difference (Lev 10:10; Ezek 44:23). I'll be honest about where I've let that line blur — in what I watch, how I talk, what I laugh at — and put the wall back up.

Sin to confess — blurred lines

Judah's priests made no distinction between holy and common, and God's glory left. I confess the ways I've treated holy things as ordinary and ordinary things as if they don't matter to God. I ask Him to make me clean and set apart again.

Warning to heed — no wall, no presence

The wall wasn't to keep enemies out; it was to keep defilement out. The men I disciple in recovery know this better than anyone: you build walls — no old phone numbers, no old haunts, no "just one" — not because you're weak in theory but because the line keeps the life. Tear the wall down and the glory leaves.

Promise to trust — a holy meal with God

The priests who were "near to the LORD" ate the most holy things in His house (v13). Guzik calls it a meal of fellowship between God and man. In Christ I am part of a royal priesthood (1 Pet 2:9), and He has set a table for me. For the man who has eaten at the table of shame for years, God invites him to eat in His house.

Example to follow — change clothes and go to the people

The priests didn't stay in the holy rooms; they changed and went out to "approach that which is for the people" (v14). Time in God's presence is meant to send me back out. I want to come from prayer and the Word into the cell block, the meeting room, the phone call — set apart, but sent.

Worship

God is holy, and He draws the line. He measures every side and walls it in, not to keep me out but to make a place where He can dwell. He feeds His priests at His own table. Holy is the LORD, and blessed are those He brings near.

Prayer

Holy God, You drew a line around Your house to divide the holy from the common. Draw that line in my life again. Forgive me where I've blurred it. Feed me at Your table, set me apart for Your service, and then send me out to the people. Help the men I walk with to build walls that guard their freedom, and fill their lives with Your presence. Amen.