EZEKIEL

Chapter 42

*Rooms for the Priests*

**Then the man led me northward into the outer court and brought me to the rooms opposite the temple courtyard and opposite the outer wall on the north side.  2 The building whose door faced north was a hundred cubits long and fifty cubits wide.  3 Both in the section twenty cubits from the inner court and in the section opposite the pavement of the outer court, gallery faced gallery at the three levels.  4 In front of the rooms was an inner passageway ten cubits wide and a hundred cubits long. Their doors were on the north.  5 Now the upper rooms were narrower, for the galleries took more space from them than from the rooms on the lower and middle floors of the building.  6 The rooms on the third floor had no pillars, as the courts had; so they were smaller in floor space than those on the lower and middle floors.  7 There was an outer wall parallel to the rooms and the outer court; it extended in front of the rooms for fifty cubits.  8 While the row of rooms on the side next to the outer court was fifty cubits long, the row on the side nearest the sanctuary was a hundred cubits long.  9 The lower rooms had an entrance on the east side as one enters them from the outer court. 10 On the south side along the length of the wall of the outer court, adjoining the temple courtyard and opposite the outer wall, were rooms  11 with a passageway in front of them. These were like the rooms on the north; they had the same length and width, with similar exits and dimensions. Similar to the doorways on the north  12 were the doorways of the rooms on the south. There was a doorway at the beginning of the passageway that was parallel to the corresponding wall extending eastward, by which one enters the rooms. 13 Then he said to me, “The north and south rooms facing the temple courtyard are the priests’ rooms, where the priests who approach the LORD will eat the most holy offerings. There they will put the most holy offerings—the grain offerings, the sin offerings and the guilt offerings—for the place is holy.  14 Once the priests enter the holy precincts, they are not to go into the outer court until they leave behind the garments in which they minister, for these are holy. They are to put on other clothes before they go near the places that are for the people.” 15 When he had finished measuring what was inside the temple area, he led me out by the east gate and measured the area all around:  16 He measured the east side with the measuring rod; it was five hundred cubits.  17 He measured the north side; it was five hundred cubits by the measuring rod.  18 He measured the south side; it was five hundred cubits by the measuring rod.  19 Then he turned to the west side and measured; it was five hundred cubits by the measuring rod.  20 So he measured the area on all four sides. It had a wall around it, five hundred cubits long and five hundred cubits wide, to separate the holy from the common.**

**42:1** *rooms opposite the temple courtyard.* Their function is described in vv. 13–14. They have no parallel in Solomon’s temple as described in 1Ki 6. (CSB)

The chapter division is almost arbitrary, since this chapter concludes the description of the temple and its environs begun in chapter 40. The same supernatural guide continues to lead the “tour,” but this fact is explicitly mentioned only in 42:1 and 42:15, which form the beginnings of the two main sections of the chapter: (1) the priests’ sacristies (42:1–14) and (2) the external dimensions of the temple complex (42:15–20). Only the second section refers to his act of measuring (the verb מָדַד), although the first section gives results of that action (measurements). (CC)

The Hebrew רֶּ֣רֶךְ הַצָּפ֑וֹןהַרֶּ֖רֶךְ is, literally, “the way was the way of the north,” that is, toward the north. Apparently Ezekiel is led out of the north inner gate into the north part of the outer court and then westward to the north side of the area behind the temple building. (CC)

In 42:1 he uses הַלִּשְׁכָּ֗ה, which must be a singular collective, “*set* of rooms.” From 42:4 on he will always use the plural לְשָׁכוֹת, “rooms.” The same word is used for the rooms mentioned in 41:10, which may or may not be the same as those described here. Based on the explanation of these rooms in 42:13–15, they are usually referred to as something like the “priests’ sacristies.” (CC)

For הַגִּזְרָ֛ה, “the restricted area,” and הַבִּנְיָ֖ן, “the building,” in it, see on 41:12. (CC)

**42:2** The difficult phrase אֶל־פְּנֵי־אֹ֨רֶךְ֙ אַמּ֣וֹת הַמֵּאָ֔ה is, literally, “to the face of length, cubits the one hundred.” The meaning clearly is that the length was one hundred cubits, as I have translated. Various translations and interpretations are offered. אֶל־פְּנֵי recurs in, for example, 42:3, 7, 10, 13. The following three words appear to exhibit both transposition of words and a wrong word division; we would expect אָרְכָּהּ מֵאָה אַמּוֹת. (CC)

It is hard to know what to make of פֶּ֖תַח הַצָּפ֑וֹן, literally, “the entrance of the north” or “north door.” To delete it as a gloss, as many critics do, explains nothing. A less radical alternative is to emend פֶּתַח to פְּאַת, resulting in “the north side,” since פְּאַת is used in 41:12. This is supported by the LXX and followed by Zimmerli and others. I too have so translated for want of a more convincing rendition. (CC)

The “width” of this set of rooms is “fifty cubits.” (CC)

**42:3** After the numeral twenty (הָֽעֶשְׂרִ֗ים), the MT has no אַמּוֹת (“cubits”). This is not all that unusual, and there is little doubt that it is implied by the context. This twenty-cubit area that “belonged to the inner court” could refer to the northern twenty-cubit open area mentioned in 41:9b–10, especially if the priests’ sacristies described in 42:1–14 are the same as the rooms mentioned in 41:10. This would mean that there were balconies on the south side of the set of rooms mentioned in 42:1. For the רִֽצְפָ֔ה, “pavement,” see the textual notes on 40:17–18 and figure 2. It is debatable, but apparently here וְנֶ֣גֶד רִֽצְפָ֔ה, “opposite the pavement,” was on the other (north) side of the set of rooms, meaning that balconies were on the north side as well. (CC)

The noun אַתִּיק occurred in 41:15–16; see on 41:15. Since its precise meaning is unknown, it is impossible to be sure what the final part of this verse is communicating. Whatever they were, they were אֶל־פְּנֵֽי־, “to the face of,” that is, “facing” one another. בַּשְּׂלִשִֽׁים, literally, “in the thirds,” implies an area divided into thirds. I have translated that as “in three stories.” Similar is לִשְׁלָשְׁתָּ֔ם in 41:16, which describes the balconies discussed there. In 42:6 the Pual participle מְשֻׁלָּשׁוֹת is used, apparently with the same meaning: “in three stories.” Some critics wish to substitute the participle here, but בַּשְּׂלִשִֽׁים is probably a stylistic variation expressing the same thing. (CC)

**42:4** The phrase אֶל־הַפְּנִימִ֔ית, “to/on the inside,” does not specify what the walkway is inside of, but probably it is inside the outer court. The MT goes on to say רֶּ֖רֶךְ אַמָּ֣ה אֶחָ֑ת, “a way, one cubit.” The reference is presumably to length, but a walkway only a cubit long is manifestly absurd. Hence virtually all commentators and modern translations (from RSV on) assume, with support from the LXX and Syriac, an original אֹרֶךְ מֵאָה אַמּוֹת (“length of one hundred cubits”). The verse already gave the ten-cubit “width” (רֹ֨חַב֙) of the walkway, and the combination of רֹחַב followed by אֹרֶךְ is common enough (e.g., 40:11; 41:2, 12; 45:6). The result, describing a passage along the whole length of the building, fits the context. More radical conjectures have been made, of course. (CC)

The final statement that the rooms’ doors faced north implies that one could enter the rooms directly from the walkway in front of them. (CC)

**42:5** That the upper rooms are “narrower” is described by קְצֻר֑וֹת, a Qal passive participle, literally, “narrow*ed*.” (Contrast the three stories of side rooms in 41:6, which became successively wider, going from bottom to top.) The sense of the כִּי clause must be “because the balconies took away space from them,” as surmised from the context. יוֹכְל֨וּ may be an irregular Qal imperfect from אָכַל, “eat,” a picturesque term, since some manuscripts have its regular imperfect form (יֹאכְלוּ). Elision of the quiescent א is common. Other manuscripts have יוּכְלוּ, the Qal imperfect of יָכֹל, “be able,” which can mean “prevail against,” although it seems a bit forced to derive from it the sense of “take away space.” Some advocate revocalization to יָכְלוּ, the Qal perfect of יָכֹל. In any case, the verb here may be used as a technical architectural term. (CC)

The מִן prefixed to both words in מֵֽהַתַּחְתֹּנ֛וֹת וּמֵהַתִּֽכֹנ֖וֹת is comparative: literally, “more than the lower ones and more than the middle ones.” The verse seems to say that the rooms of the upper story were narrower than those of the other two stories by the width of their balconies. (CC)

**42:6** “In three stories” is a free rendition of the Pual participle מְשֻׁלָּשׁוֹת֙, “thirded,” that is, “divided into three parts.” (CC)

The absence of pillars (to support the balconies?) now gives the reason for the slanting backward of the upper story. Zimmerli prefers the LXX ἐξωτέρων (as if the Hebrew were חִיצֹנוֹת) to the MT חֲצֵר֑וֹת and translates, “<outer> (chambers).” His assumption is that this verse is later commentary on the “basic text” of 40:17, where only rooms were mentioned. But that is conjectural, at best. (CC)

Since much of Ezekiel’s temple is patterned after that of Solomon, this verse probably implies that the courts of the Solomonic temple were colonnaded, although that is never mentioned in Kings and Chronicles. We know from Jn 10:23 and from Josephus that there were colonnades in the courts of the Herodian temple. (CC)

The meaning of נֶאֱצַ֗ל as “had to be shortened” is an intelligent guess from the context. It is the Niphal participle of a rare verb, אָצַל, used elsewhere in the related sense of “withdraw, take away.” It may be another of those technical architectural terms that we are no longer able to understand fully. Some attempt to relate it to the noun אַצִּיל in 13:18 or אַצִּילָה in 41:8. Its subject is unspecified, but in context it must be the upper story that “had to be shortened.” NIV interprets: “so they [the rooms on the third floor] were smaller in floor space.”

“From the ground” (מֵהָאָֽרֶץ) apparently intends to clarify the reference point for “lower,” “middle,” and “upper,” but in English seems redundant, so I have placed it in parentheses. (CC)

**42:7** The גָּדֵר, “wall,” may be protective. It is fifty cubits long, most likely running along the east side of the building (see 42:9), not along the north side, where its length would more likely be one hundred cubits, corresponding to the length of the מַהֲלַךְ (“walkway”) of 42:4. (CC)

**42:8** The length of the rooms mentioned in the previous verse and also in the next is given in this verse as fifty cubits; these rooms seem to be the ones on the short side of the building facing east. But 42:8b is much disputed. The use of וְהִנֵּ֛ה, “and behold,” is unexpected because it appears nowhere else in 42:1–14 and because in chapters 40–48 it usually is used only when a new aspect of the vision is introduced (although 47:2 is one exception). Some suggest changing its vowels to form the adverb הֵנָּה, “here, on this side.” The second half of the verse refers to another set of rooms, although לְשָׁכוֹת is absent. The part of the temple referred to would be the long side facing north. Ezekiel generally uses הֵיכָל for the “nave” and prefers בַּיִת (“house”) for the entire temple structure, but here he must use הַהֵיכָ֖ל for the temple structure. Although the MT uses unusual idioms, it is attested by Vulgate, Syriac, and Targum. (CC)

Some, on the basis of the LXX emend עַל־פְּנֵ֥י הַהֵיכָ֖ל to עַל־פָּנֶיהָ הַכֹּל. Together with the change to הֵנָּה, that results in something like this: “as they were facing it, the whole [measured] one hundred cubits.” The two readings differ substantially and are typical of the exegetical morass presented by these chapters, amply evident in the ancient versions, and not clarified by modern “scientific” study. (CC)

**42:9 T**he Qere וּמִתַּ֖חַת הַלְּשָׁכ֣וֹת הָאֵ֑לֶּה is “from under these rooms.” The Kethib apparently would be vocalized וּמִתַּחְתָהּ לְשָׁכוֹת הָאֵ֑לֶּה, “and from under it [them], these rooms.” The feminine singular suffix on וּמִתַּחְתָהּ would have to refer to the feminine plural לְשָׁכוֹת. The suffix is of the form normally found on singular nouns, but the preposition תַּחַת regularly takes the suffix form for plural nouns (which here would be וּמִתַּחְתֶּיהָ). The Kethib also lacks a definite article on לְשָׁכוֹת, while the following demonstrative pronoun הָאֵ֑לֶּה has the article. However, other examples of such lack of concord can be found. “Under” (תַּחַת) here must imply “at the foot, base,” so NKJV correctly gives “at the lower chambers.” (CC)

The Kethib, הַמָּבוֹא, clearly means an “entrance.” The Qere,הַמֵּבִיא֙ , is the Hiphil participle of בּוֹא (with article), “bringing,” which normally would require a direct object. Practically all translations, starting with KJV follow the Kethib. (CC)

Apparently the picture is that it was impossible to enter the building directly from the court. Entrance was only via the walkway on the north (42:4) or this entrance on the east, which was shielded by the wall (42:7). This prevented unauthorized entry and protected the sacrality of the building. Only the priests could enter (42:13–14). (CC)

**42:10** This verse begins a brief description of the southern sacristies. This topic continues through 42:12. These rooms turn out to be mirror images of the northern sacristies (42:1–9), and it is precisely this theme that 42:10–12 seems most concerned to emphasize, that is, the perfect symmetry of the entire temple complex. But the very brevity of the descriptions, magnified by continued textual difficulties, combine to make the translator’s and exegete’s task a rather daunting one. (CC)

This verse begins with בְּרֹ֣חַב ׀ גֶּ֣דֶר הֶחָצֵ֗ר, “in the width of the wall of the court,” implying that the rooms to be described were within the wall and their size corresponded to the width of the wall. Most translations follow the MT fairly literally (e.g., KJV, ESV, NASB), as do some commentators. However, RSV (“where the outside wall begins”) and some commentators take these words as the end of the sentence begun in 42:9 and emend רֹחַב to רֹאשׁ, “head, top, beginning.” רֹאשׁ also appears (in a different context) in 42:12. The LXX supports “at the beginning” but has a different text: κατὰ τὸ φῶς τοῦ ἐν ἀρχῇ περιπάτου, “according to the light of the walkway at the beginning.” (CC)

The MT states that the rooms are רֶּ֧רֶךְ הַקָּדִ֛ים, “on the east side.” The Vulgate and some English translations reflect that (e.g., KJV, NKJV, NASB). Others, following the LXX (τὰ πρὸς νότον), give “south side” (e.g., RSV, NIV,ESV). The context, especially “south” in 42:12 and “the northern and southern rooms” in 42:13, clearly requires “south” here. Perhaps מֵֽהַקָּדִ֔ים in 42:9 caused a scribe to write הַקָּדִ֛ים here also in place of הַרָּרוֹם, “the south.” The description of their location obviously parallels that of the northern rooms in 42:1. Here אֶל־פְּנֵי (“opposite”) is used twice as an equivalent for נֶגֶד twice in 42:1. (CC)

**42:11-12** I have translated the first two Hebrew words, וְדֶ֙רֶךְ֙ לִפְנֵיהֶ֔ם, as a separate sentence, but they could easily be linked with the end of 42:10, although the sense is the same in either case. (CC)

I have taken the rest of 42:11 as part of the same sentence that continues in 42:12. The syntax of the rest of 42:11 and first part of 42:12 is debatable and English translations and commentaries disagree, although the main point is clear: the southern rooms were identical to the northern ones. Probably the next sentence continues through the end of 42:12. Its first part, beginning with כְּמַרְאֵ֣ה and extending through the end of 42:11, describes the northern rooms and their features. Many of the terms are prefixed by the prepositionכְּ , “as, like.” Once, before רָחְבָּ֑ן, “their width,” we find כֵּ֣ן, “so also,” which here probably is used as an equivalent for כְּ, and so the LXX rightly translates it in the same way (κατά) as it does כְּ. Then the southern rooms are described in 42:12, beginning with the prepositionכְּ on וּכְפִתְחֵ֣י (literally, “and like the entrances of …”). Hebrew can repeat כְּ “to signify the completeness of the correspondency between two objects. To indicate this, the translation renders the כְּ at the beginning of the sentence in 42:11 as “just like” and the כְּ on וּכְפִתְחֵ֣י at the beginning of the description of the southern rooms in 42:12 as “identical were.” (CC)

In 42:11, one might have expected another כְּ instead of וְכֹל֙ before מוֹצָ֣אֵיהֶ֔ן, and many critics emend accordingly. However, the versions clearly support the MT although some omit כְּ before the following words. (CC)

וּכְמִשְׁפְּטֵיהֶ֖ן is the plural of the noun מִשְׁפָּט (with כְּ and suffix) in the sense of “their designs, layouts, arrangements.” This an excellent illustration of the polyvalence of the word, which in other contexts can mean “custom, ordinance, justice, judgment, law suit, legal claim.” (CC)

**42:12** Since the first Hebrew word (וּכְפִתְחֵ֣י) of 42:12 is not translated in the LXX many treat it as basically dittographical and emend it in various ways, but it is retained in my translation. (CC)

The “passageway” (רֶּרֶךְ) in 42:11–12 is presumably the counterpart to the “walkway” (מַהֲלַךְ֩) in 42:4. In רֶּ֗רֶךְרָּ֑רֶךְ (42:12), the second occurrence of the word begins a new phrase, set off by commas in the translation, that defines this “passageway” more precisely. However, the phrase הַגְּדֶ֣רֶת הֲגִינָ֔ה is obscure. גְּדֶרֶת is a feminine counterpart of the more common גָּדֵר, and both mean “wall.” Even though it has the article, הַגְּדֶ֣רֶת appears to be in construct. The meaning of הֲגִינָ֔ה is uncertain. It is a hapax and apparently another architectural term. The versions make various guesses. The rabbinical tradition understood it in a sense like “appropriate, corresponding,” which I have followed (so also NRSV, ESV, and NIV. Other common guesses are “protective” or “intervening.” One suspects a parallelism with the wall described in 42:7, but there is no way to claim any certainty. (CC)

The words רֶּ֥רֶךְ הַקָּדִ֖ים בְּבוֹאָֽן are an abbreviated repetition of 42:9, meaning “the way of (from) the east as one comes” to these rooms. The third feminine plural suffix on בְּבוֹאָֽן (Qal infinitive of בּוֹא; Gen 30:38 has the identical form), literally, “when they come,” perhaps is influenced by the feminine plural “rooms” (הַלְּשָׁכוֹת, 42:11–12) or by the many third feminine plural suffixes on nouns in 42:11–12. (CC)

**42:13** *priests who approach the Lord.* The sons of Zadok (see 40:6 and note on 44:15). (CSB)

*eat the most holy offerings.* The priests normally received partial maintenance by being allowed to eat certain sacrifices (see Lev 2:3; 5:13; 6:16, 26, 29; 7:6, 10). (CSB)

The reader should note the uniqueness of 42:13–14 within the context of chapters 40–42. For the first time the usually silent guide (see the commentary on 40:3) identifies and also explains in some detail the significance of the rooms Ezekiel observes. The exegete will also be aware that the many textual difficulties that often frustrate us in other parts of these chapters are virtually absent here. The copyists were obviously familiar with the vocabulary and procedure described. A trivial textual problem is the absence of a *waw* on לִֽשְׁכ֣וֹת to connect “the northern rooms *and* the southern rooms.” (CC)

The rooms are unhesitatingly called “holy rooms.” The construct phrase לִֽשְׁכ֣וֹת הַקֹּ֗דֶשׁ, “rooms of holiness,” is an attributive or qualitative genitive. In biblical thought, the quality of holiness is an attribute of God himself, who alone is holy (Rev 15:4). When he imparts holiness, it is not only ethical, but also temporal and spatial. Paganism, however, tended to omit the ethical dimension and identify the holy with nature. But in biblical theology, since all creation has been corrupted by man’s fall into sin, holy things in this world are not so by nature in the order of creation. Rather, they are holy by God’s gracious election and command in the order of redemption, according to his Word. The theology is parallel to that of the NT Sacraments, whereby ordinary elements (water, bread, wine) become sacred means of grace according to God’s Word and Christ’s institution. Although there is no exact NT parallel to the OT application here, “sacristies,” and, in light of 42:14, also “vestries” (perhaps the pastor’s study) are the nearest ecclesiastical counterpart. (CC)

The priests are first to “deposit” (יַנִּ֣יחוּ, imperfect of the second Hiphil conjugation of נוּחַ) the most holy things in these “holy rooms” before eating them. Basically, this stipulation is made because these offerings could not be eaten anywhere the priests desired, but only in a holy place (as commanded in Lev 6:16, 26; 7:6; 10:13) and because they had to be prepared properly first, boiling in the case of meat (Lev 6:28) or baked without yeast in the case of grain (Lev 6:17). (CC)

The triad of types of sacrifice mentioned here (וְהַמִּנְחָה֙ וְהַחַטָּ֣את וְהָאָשָׁ֔ם) is the same as in 40:39 except that מִנְחָה here replaces עוֹלָה. In Ezekiel there is no significance in the variation. מִנְחָה is, of itself, a very generic word, meaning a “gift” of almost any sort, but in sacrificial contexts it applies to the eucharistic aspect of all sacrifices that are joyful gifts from the worshiper to God. Etymologically, עוֹלָה is simply a feminine participle of עָלָה (modifying the implied but unstated feminine noun מִנְחָה). In the revelation to Moses, however, both came to refer to discrete types of sacrifices. מִנְחָה often refers specifically to the unbloody “grain offering,” which under certain circumstances (especially penury) could be substituted for the עוֹלָה, “burnt offering.” Although expiation was not their main emphasis, it plainly is present in both. In fact, one could almost assert that all the biblical motifs of sacrifice were present in all the types of sacrifice, although each type tends to accent one particular motif. (CC)

**42:14** The initial clause בְּבֹאָ֣ם הַכֹּהֲנִ֗ים is, literally, “when they enter, the priests,” meaning “when the priests enter.” The Qal infinitive construct of בּוֹא (with בְּ) has a proleptic pronominal suffix (ָם, “they”) that anticipates the subject, “the priests.” The following clause, וְלֹֽא־יֵצְא֤וּ מֵהַקֹּ֨דֶשׁ֙, literally, “they shall not go out from the holy place,” makes clear that the place they had entered is הַקֹּ֨דֶשׁ֙. (CC)

The next clause, וְשָׁ֞ם יַנִּ֧יחוּ בִגְדֵיהֶ֛ם, literally, “and there they shall deposit their vestments,” refers to the holy place by the same adverb שָׁם, “there,” that referred to the holy place emphatically twice in 42:13 (see the note there). The same verb, יַנִּ֧יחוּ (imperfect of the second Hiphil conjugation of נוּחַ), “deposit,” here for storing the sacred vestments, was used in 42:13 in the command that the priests “deposit” the most holy offerings in the holy place before eating them. The reason for the command about the vestments is כִּֽי־קֹ֣דֶשׁ הֵ֑נָּה, “because they are holy.” The third feminine plural pronoun הֵ֑נָּה must be chosen to clarify that this refers to “their vestments” (בִגְדֵיהֶ֛ם) rather than to the (masculine) priests. Likewise, יְשָׁרְת֥וּ בָהֶ֖ן means that the priests “serve” (Piel imperfect of שָׁרַת) “in them,” and the third feminine plural suffix on בָהֶ֖ן again refers to the vestments. Elsewhere in the OT בְּגָדִים is usually construed as masculine, but in Ezekiel the exegete is accustomed to inconsistencies in gender (and number) by this time. (CC)

In the injunction for the priests to “put on other clothes,” the Qere (וְלָבְשׁוּ֨) is the perfect with *waw* while the Kethib (יִלְבְּשׁוּ) is the imperfect without *waw*. The imperfect is customary in a command and so accents the change more. (CC)

Because holiness is contagious, it dare not come into contact with the חוֹל, “common, profane” (the term used in 42:20, which see). In many respects—theological, sacramental, ethical—it is part of the essence of the church as God’s people separate from the world to maintain the distinction between the holy and the common. The pastor should constantly bear in mind God’s holiness as he carries out his holy office. He is to be a faithful steward of the mysteries of God as he celebrates, proclaims, and communicates God’s holiness. He is to administer the Sacraments (antitypes of the OT sacrifices) according to Christ’s institution and mandate, not indiscriminately. Likewise, the pastor’s vestments traditionally are worn only in appropriate worship settings and are treated with due reverence. The stipulations about “the most holy offerings” (42:13) might also find application in such things as the wise stewardship of church offerings, which are not to be squandered on worldly programs that may be unobjectionable, but rather they are for the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (CC)

Yet with Christ as our ἀρχιερεύς, “High Priest” (the theme of Hebrews; cf. John 17), the OT distinction between priesthood and laity no longer obtains in the same way. During Christ’s earthly ministry, he crossed the spatial and temporal boundaries between the sacred and the common, perhaps most obviously by ministering on the Sabbath and also by casting out demons and touching to heal, even grasping the unclean to raise the dead (Mt 9:25; Lk 7:14). On the cross, “the Holy One of God” (Jn 6:69; also Mk 1:24; Lk 4:34) allowed himself to be blasphemed and profaned to garner our salvation. And he comes even now, through his Word and Sacraments, precisely to forgive sinners and heal the sick and dying with everlasting life. (CC)

**42:15** This verse states that the first part of the great measuring process, which began at 40:5, is now complete: “thus he had finished the measurements of the interior of the temple area.” These words almost have the character of a superscription. The guidance formula then reappears: “he led me out” (see the second textual note on 40:2). The expected Classical Hebrew form (וַיּוֹצִאֵ֗נִי, Hiphil imperfect with *waw* consecutive) was in 42:1. Here, with the same meaning, is וְהוֹצִיאַ֙נִי֨, the Hiphil perfect with conjunctive *waw* (and first common singular suffix). The following clause too (וּמְדָד֖וֹ) uses a perfect verb with conjunctive *waw*, which becomes common in Late Biblical Hebrew (and the norm in postbiblical Hebrew) as the imperfect with *waw* consecutive declines (and is absent from Rabbinic and Modern Hebrew). Similarly, the four almost identically formulated statements in 42:16–19 use the asyndetic perfect מָדַד, “he measured” (see also 42:20). (CC)

The suffix of וּמְדָד֖וֹ, “and he measured it” (42:15), is not specified, but in context it soon becomes clear that “it” must be a contrast to the preceding הַבַּ֣יִת הַפְּנִימִ֔י, literally, “the inner temple,” that is, “the interior of the temple area.” The following measurements must be of the temple perimeter, after the interior tour has been completed. (Otherwise, we become embroiled in major contradictions.) (CC)

**42:16-19** In measuring the four sides, the guide begins at the east gate (42:16). Then in 42:17–19 he moves to the north, south, and west sides. This is the same order in which the gates on the four sides of the new Jerusalem are described in Rev 21:13, strengthening the view that Ezekiel 40–48 is an OT equivalent to, and is fulfilled by, Revelation 21–22. See further “Introduction to Ezekiel 40–48.” Throughout 42:16–20 the geographical “side” is expressed by a rare use of the word רוּחַ, “spirit, wind, breath.” The idiom likely arose with reference to the direction from which the wind would blow directly on a side. Similar was מֵאַרְבַּ֤ע רוּחוֹת֙, “from the four winds,” referring to the four geographical directions, in 37:9. (CC)

**42:20** *five hundred cubits long and five hundred cubits wide.* Perfect symmetry in the ideal temple’s total area. (CSB)

The concluding summary verse does double duty in the literary structure of Ezekiel 40–48. First, the surrounding “wall” creates an inclusio with 40:5, which began the description of the temple compound by noting (but not measuring) this same “wall.” Second, the wall’s purpose, “to separate the holy from the common,” prepares for the climactic advent of the holy “Glory,” the divine resident of the temple, in 43:1–12. All the preceding detail has been preparation for this arrival. (CC)

The final measurements, like most of those in chapters 40–42, are merely two dimensional. Whether each side of the square is five hundred cubits or rods (see on 42:16), it is dwarfed by its fulfillment in Rev 21:16, where the new Jerusalem is twelve thousand stadia, or about 2,220 kilometers or 1,380 miles, on each side—and also is of equal height, forming a perfect three-dimensional cube. (CC)

The purpose of the wall לְהַבְרִּ֕יל בֵּ֥ין הַקֹּ֖דֶשׁ לְחֹֽל, “to separate the holy from the common,” is almost a verbatim quote from Yahweh’s definitive pronouncement about the purpose of the office of the priests in Lev 10:10, in conjunction with their ministry of teaching the people in Lev 10:11. The same language had been used in Ezek 22:26, where Yahweh declared that Israel’s unfaithful priests had failed in their liturgical and teaching ministry: they were “profaning what is holy to me, by not distinguishing between the holy and the common or teaching the difference between the unclean and the clean.” Almost identical language will be used again, but positively, in 44:23, where Yahweh will declare that in the future the priests will carry out these aspects of their office. (CC)

This divine purpose virtually summarizes the theme of all of chapters 40–48. Jewish tradition coined the noun הַבְהָלָה, “separation, division,” from the Hiphil verb הִבְרִּיל used here (and already in Gen 1:4, 6–7, 14, 18). The goal of ritual purity and holiness, attempted through deeds of the Law and avoidance of what is “unclean” (Ezek 22:26; 44:23), is central to traditional Judaism, which, however, fails to attain it (cf. Rom 9:31–33). Instead, the divine purpose in the OT is fulfilled in Christ; justification and sanctification freely come to all believers simply through faith in him (cf. Rom 9:30). The “scandal of particularity” is that it is only through faith in Jesus Christ that we sinners can be and are reconciled to the holy God and that we gain entrance into the eternal city through its gates (cf. Jn 10:1–9; Rev 7:13–17; 21:7–8; 22:14–15). To retain her holiness in Christ, the church must vigilantly remain countercultural in many aspects of faith, ethics, and worship practice and thus keep herself “unstained from the world” (James 1:27). (CC)