EZEKIEL 42

A Wall Between the Holy and the Profane

“He measured it on the four sides; it had a wall all around, the length five hundred and the width five hundred, to divide between the holy and the profane.”
EZEKIEL 42:20

Where Ezekiel has brought us

1. The vision that began “in the twenty-fifth year of our exile” (40:1), about 573 BC, continues.

2. Remember what came before.

The North Chambers

Three tiers of priests' rooms face the separate area on the north.

EZEKIEL 42:1

Then he brought me out into the outer court, the way toward the north; and he brought me to the chamber which was opposite the separate area and opposite the building toward the north.

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik notes how carefully ordered the whole design is: 'There was nothing about this structure that was haphazard.'

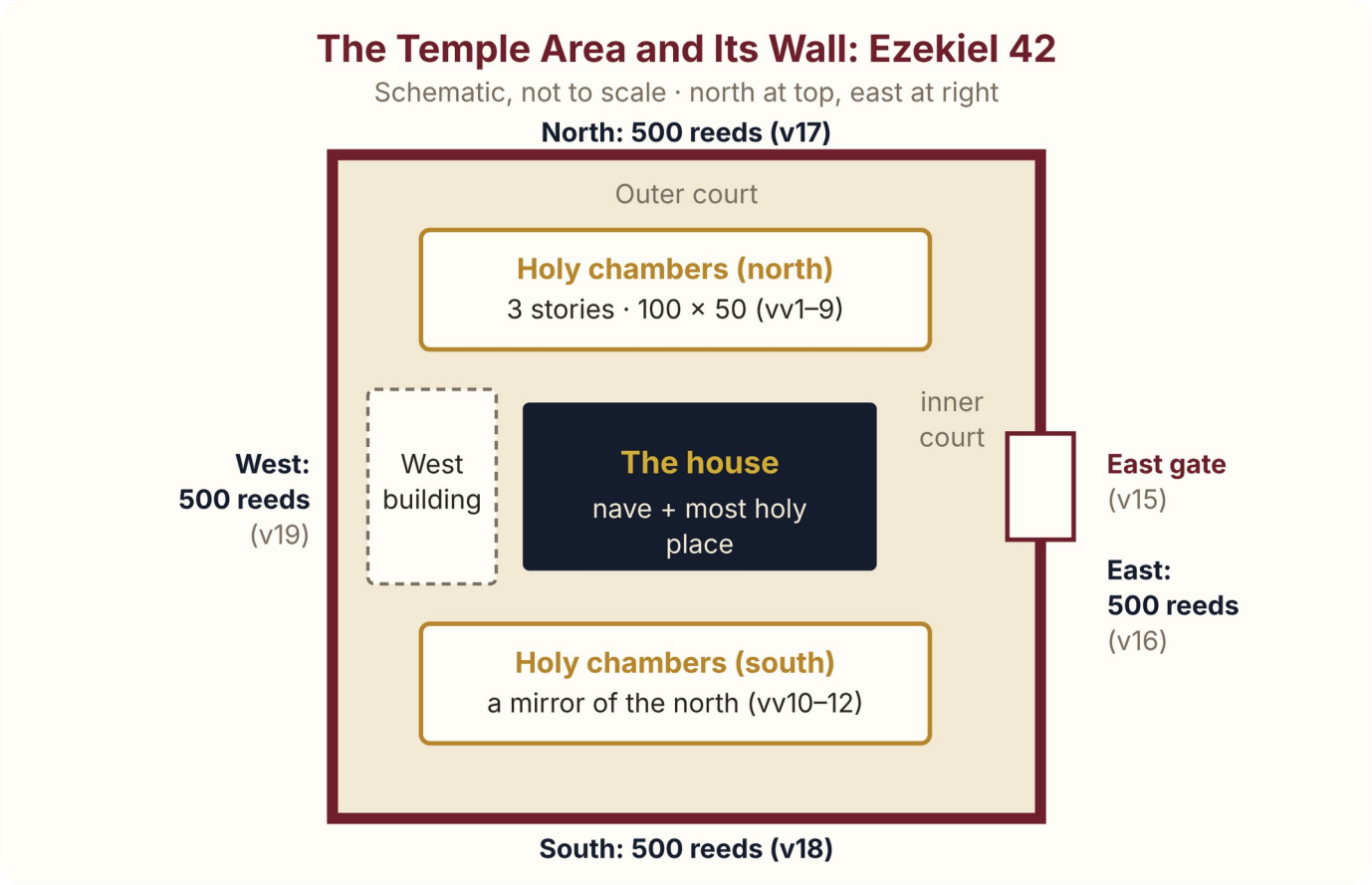
WHAT IT MEANS

Before the guide says a word about holiness, he walks Ezekiel past a long block of rooms in three tiers, a hundred cubits long and fifty wide (v2). It looks like plain building detail, and in a sense it is.

ʾattiq (אַתִּיק)
ʾATTIQ · "LEDGE, GALLERY"

ʾAttiq means a ledge, a terrace, a gallery. The north block of chambers rose with "gallery corresponding to gallery in three stories" (v3).

The Temple Area and Its Wall (Ezekiel 42)



A schematic of the temple area: the house at the center, the holy chambers north and south, the east gate, and the outer wall measured five hundred on every side.

The South Chambers

A matching block on the other side, the same size, exits and doors.

EZEKIEL 42:10

In the thickness of the wall of the court toward the east, facing the separate area and facing the building, there were chambers.

WHAT IT MEANS

The south chambers are a mirror of the north: same size, same exits, same arrangement (v11). God's house is balanced and whole, with no forgotten side and no lesser wing.

lishkah (לִשְׁכָּה)

LISHKAH · "A ROOM, CHAMBER, HALL"

Lishkah is a room, a chamber or hall, and it is the most repeated word in the chapter (vv1–13). In verses 10–12 a second set of chambers stands on the south, built into the thickness of the court wall.

Holy Meals and Holy Garments

The priests who are near to the LORD eat the most holy things and change before going out.

EZEKIEL 42:14

"When the priests enter, then they shall not go out into the outer court from the sanctuary without laying there their garments in which they minister, for they are holy. They shall put on other garments; then they shall approach that which is for the people."

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik sees more than a paycheck in the priests' portion: 'This was a meal of fellowship between God and man.'

WHAT IT MEANS

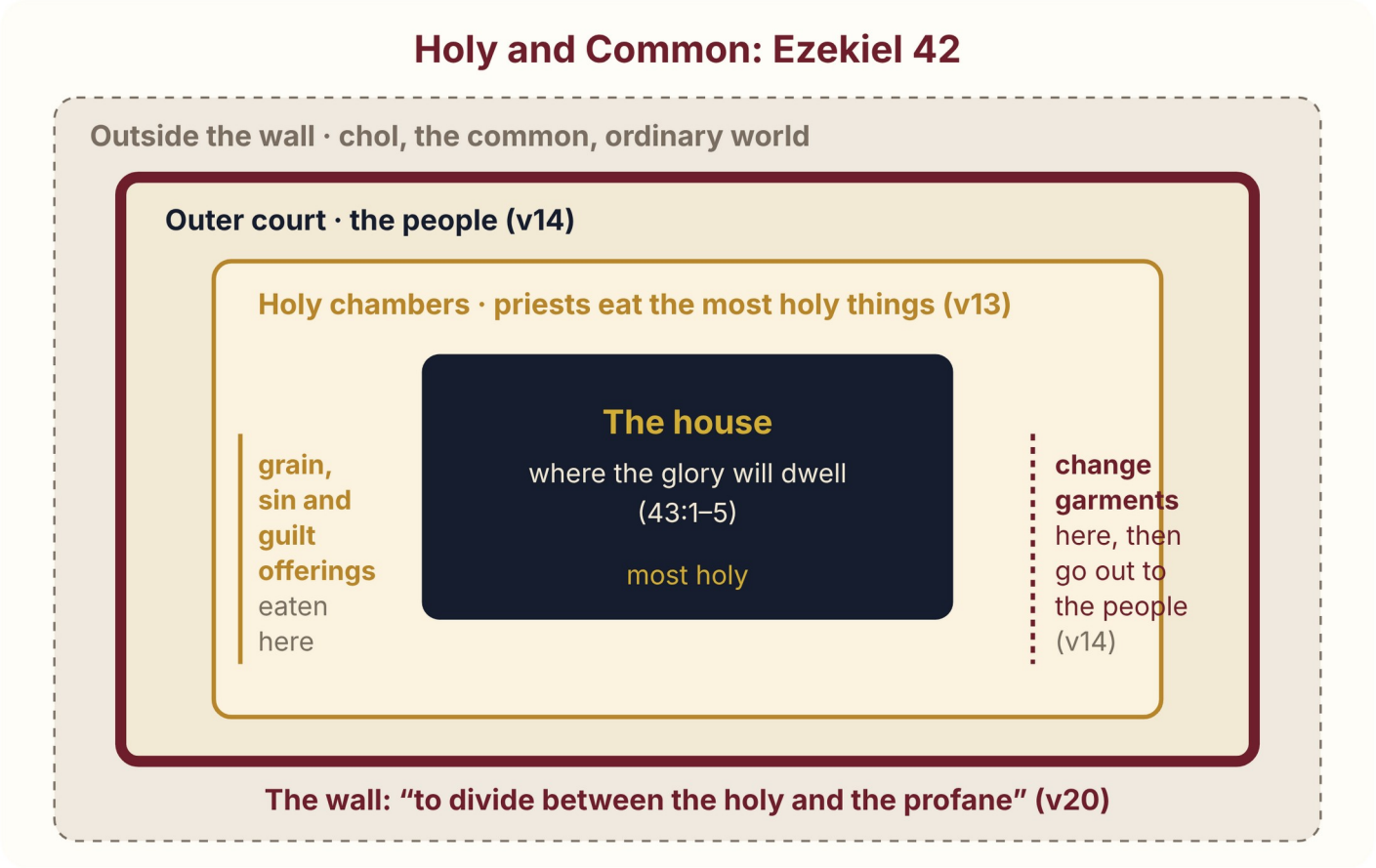
Under the Law the priests ate their share of the offerings in a holy place (Lev 6:16, 26), and that portion was how God provided for them (Num 18:9–10). Here it is a holy meal with God.

qarob (קָרוֹב)

QAROB · "NEAR, CLOSE AT HAND"

Qarob means near, close at hand. The rooms are "the holy chambers where the priests who are near to the LORD shall eat the most holy things" (v13).

Holy and Common (Ezekiel 42:13–14, 20)



Rings of holiness: the house, the holy chambers where priests eat and change, the outer court of the people, and the wall that divides the holy from the profane.

Five Hundred on Every Side

Outside by the east gate, the guide measures all four sides of the great wall.

EZEKIEL 42:15

Now when he had finished measuring the inner house, he brought me out by the way of the gate which faced toward the east and measured it all around.

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik takes the measure as rods, an area of almost a square mile, and says the support for reading cubits is ‘small.’

WHAT IT MEANS

When the guide had finished measuring the inner house, he went outside and walked the whole perimeter, east, north, south and west (vv15–19).

qaneh (קָנֶה)

QANEH · “A REED, MEASURING ROD”

Qaneh is a reed, a measuring rod. “He measured on the east side with the measuring reed five hundred reeds by the measuring reed” (v16), and then the north, the south and the west, each the same.

To Divide Between the Holy and the Profane

The wall's purpose is named: not to keep armies out, but to keep the line clear.

EZEKIEL 42:20

He measured it on the four sides; it had a wall all around, the length five hundred and the width five hundred, to divide between the holy and the profane.

DAVID GUZIK

Block, in Guzik, makes clear what the wall is not for: 'They are not constructed to keep enemy forces out, if by these forces one means human foes of Israel.' The danger was defilement, not armies.

WHAT IT MEANS

This is the point of the whole wall, and of the whole chapter. Judah's priests had erased the line between holy and common, and God's glory left.

badal (בָּדַל)

BADAL · "TO SEPARATE"

Badal means to separate, to make a distinction. The wall was there "to divide between the holy and the profane" (v20).

What to carry from this chapter

1

Nothing haphazard.

Guzik notes that every length, story and gallery of the priests' chambers was carefully ordered (vv1–9).

2

Upper rooms were smaller.

The galleries took space from the top story, so each level was set back from the one below (vv5–6).

3

Near to the LORD.

Qarob, near: the priests are defined by their nearness to God, and He feeds them at His house (v13).

4

A meal of fellowship.

Guzik sees the priests' portion of the offerings as fellowship between God and man, not only a wage.

More to carry

5

Change, then go.

The priests laid aside their holy garments and put on others before they went out to the people (v14).

6

Rods, not cubits.

Guzik reads five hundred rods, almost a square mile, far larger than the present temple mount (vv16–19).

7

Not to keep armies out.

Block, in Guzik, says the wall guards against defilement, not human enemies (v20).

8

A line drawn in stone.

Badal, to make a distinction, and chol, common: the wall restores the line Judah's priests had erased (22:26).

Talk it through

1. Why do you think God spent so much detail on the priests' ordinary rooms before He spoke of holiness?

2. The priests ate the most holy things in God's house. What does it mean to you that God feeds those who come near Him?

3. The priests changed garments and then went out to the people. How does time with God send you back out?

4. Where has the line between holy and common blurred in your life, and what would putting the wall back up look like?

5. Every side of the wall measured the same. Which side of your life gets less care than the others?

CLOSING

God measured every side of His house and built a wall to keep the holy holy, and then He came back to live there. He is not walling you out; He is walling in a place where He can dwell with you. Let Him draw the line again, and then go out to the people.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

O·I·A study, slides and reflection journal: see the Ezekiel study page.