

Ezekiel 42:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

He measured the east side with the measuring reed, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed round about. The repetition **with the measuring reed** twice in one verse emphasizes the instrument's importance—this wasn't approximate estimation but exact measurement using a standardized qaneh (קנה), approximately 10.5 feet long. **Five hundred reeds** equals roughly 5,250 feet or nearly a mile per side, creating a temple complex of enormous proportions.

The east side is measured first because it faces the direction of sunrise, of God's glory, and of hope. In Scripture, orientation toward the east carries theological significance: the Garden of Eden had cherubim guarding its eastern entrance (Genesis 3:24), the tabernacle opened eastward (Exodus 27:13), and Christ will return from the east (Matthew 24:27). The temple's eastern orientation meant worshipers faced toward God's glory when entering, and priests serving inside faced east when ministering. This massive eastern wall would serve as the entry point for divine glory in the next chapter (43:1-4), making its measurement critical.

Historical Context

The measuring reed (qaneh) functioned as the ancient Near Eastern equivalent of a surveyor's rod. Ezekiel 40:5 establishes the reed as six cubits long (using the long cubit of approximately 21 inches, making the reed about 10.5 feet). Archaeological excavations of ancient temples—including Herod's later expansion of the second temple—show that sacred architecture followed precise

mathematical proportions, but none approached the scale of Ezekiel's vision. The 500-reed measurement per side created a perfect square, symbolizing completeness and perfection. For comparison, Solomon's temple complex was approximately 500 feet × 300 feet—Ezekiel's vision is more than ten times larger in each direction. This speaks not just to physical grandeur but to the comprehensive scope of God's future restoration: space enough for all His covenant people.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. What does the precision of divine measurement teach about God's exacting standards for holiness and worship?
2. How does the eastern orientation of God's temple challenge our casual, direction-less approach to worship?

Interlinear Text

מָדַד	רֹאשׁ	הַקֶּדֶם	בְּקֶלֶב	הַמִּדָּה	חֲמִשָּׁה	אֶת
He measured	side	the east	reed	with the measuring	five	
H4058	H7307	H6921	H7070	H4060	H2568	H520
בְּקֶלֶב	בְּקֶלֶב	הַמִּדָּה	סָבִיב:			
reed	reed	with the measuring	round about			
H7070	H7070	H4060	H5439			

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 40:3 (Parallel theme): And he brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate.

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