

Ezekiel 42:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

He measured the north side, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed round about. After the east, the angel measures the north—moving clockwise around the temple complex. The repetition of **five hundred reeds** confirms the perfect square: all four sides equal, creating geometrical perfection that reflects divine order. The consistency of measurement from side to side demonstrates that God's standards don't vary based on visibility or importance—the back and sides receive the same attention as the front.

The north side in temple orientation held significance: it was the direction from which God's glory-throne was envisioned in Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 14:13, referencing the mythical 'mount of assembly in the far north'), and from which invading judgment came (Jeremiah 1:14-15, 4:6). Yet in Ezekiel's vision, the north side is enclosed and protected, measured and secure. What was once the direction of threat becomes part of the sacred perimeter. This pictures redemption: God transforms places of vulnerability into fortified sanctuary.

Historical Context

In ancient Israelite cosmology, the north held ambiguous significance. Mount Zaphon, the sacred mountain of Baal located north of Israel, was considered the dwelling place of gods in Canaanite mythology. Isaiah polemically places Yahweh's throne in 'the far north' (Isaiah 14:13), claiming this cosmic direction for Israel's God alone. Historically, Israel's enemies invaded from the north—Assyria, Babylon,

later the Seleucids and Romans. The north represented danger and divine judgment. Yet in Ezekiel's temple, the north side is incorporated into the perfect square of sacred space. This demonstrates that God's redemptive plan encompasses all directions, neutralizing ancient threats and sanctifying all space. In the new creation, there will be no vulnerable direction, no unprotected flank—God's presence secures all.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. What 'north sides'—vulnerable areas or past wounds—does God protect when you dwell in His presence?
2. How does the equal measurement of all four sides challenge our tendency to neglect less visible areas of spiritual life?

Interlinear Text

מָדַד	רֹחַ	הַצֵּפּוֹן	חֲמִשָּׁה	מֵאֹת	בִּקְלָה	בִּקְלָה
He measured	side	the north	five	hundred	reed	reed
H4058	H7307	H6828	H2568	H3967	H7070	H7070
הַמִּדָּה	סָבִיב:					
with the measuring	round about					
H4060	H5439					