

# Ezekiel 42:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

## Analysis

The massive wall—'five hundred reeds long, and five hundred broad' (approximately 3,000 feet or over half a mile per side)—creates a perfect square enclosing the entire temple complex. This wall's purpose is explicitly stated: 'to make a separation between the sanctuary and the profane place.' The Hebrew *חֹל* ('profane') doesn't mean morally evil but common, ordinary, secular—that which is not consecrated. The wall teaches that God's holiness requires clear boundaries. The perfect square shape echoes the Most Holy Place (1 Kings 6:20) and the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:16), symbolizing perfection, completeness, and divine order. The five hundred measurement (50 x 10) combines jubilee (50, Leviticus 25) and completeness (10), suggesting ultimate, complete restoration. Reformed theology emphasizes believers are 'a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people' (1 Peter 2:9)—set apart from the world while ministering within it.

## Historical Context

Ancient temples featured enclosure walls defining sacred precincts. Archaeological excavations reveal temple compounds at Babylon, Nineveh, and Karnak with massive boundary walls separating sacred from profane. However, Ezekiel's dimensions exceed any historical Israelite temple—Solomon's temple mount was considerably smaller. This has prompted interpretative debates: Is this literal (millennial temple), symbolic (spiritual realities), or idealized (divine standards)?

Regardless, the principle stands: holiness requires separation. The wall prevented Gentile incursion (a later issue in Herod's temple, Acts 21:28-29) and maintained consecrated ground. For the exiles who had witnessed Jerusalem's walls destroyed and the temple desecrated, this vision promised impenetrable boundaries securing God's dwelling. Ultimately fulfilled in Christ who unites Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 2:14) while maintaining separation from the world (James 4:4).

## Related Passages

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**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

## Study Questions

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1. What 'walls' do you maintain separating consecrated from common areas of your life?
2. How do you balance being 'in the world but not of the world'—maintaining necessary separation without isolationism?
3. Does the massive wall's size challenge casual approaches to holiness that minimize distinctions between sacred and secular?

## Interlinear Text

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סַבִּיבָּן לֹא רֹוח וְתִּרְבְּעָה מִזְדָּה נִמְזָה וְתִּרְבְּעָה  
 it by the four sides He measured it had a wall  
 H702 H7307 H4058 H2346 H0 H5439

מֵא וְתִּמְשְׁבֵּחַ וְרַבְבָּה מֵא וְתִּמְשְׁבֵּחַ אֶת  
 round about reeds long and five hundred broad and five hundred  
 H5439 H753 H2568 H3967 H7341 H2568 H3967

לְחַלְלָה בֵּין פְּקָדָשׁ לְפָבָדָה  
 to make a separation between the sanctuary and the profane place  
 H914 H996 H6944 H2455

## Additional Cross-References

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**Ezekiel 45:2** (Temple): Of this there shall be for the sanctuary five hundred in length, with five hundred in breadth, square round about; and fifty cubits round about for the suburbs thereof.

**Ezekiel 22:26** (Parallel theme): Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.

**Ezekiel 40:5** (Parallel theme): And behold a wall on the outside of the house round about, and in the man's hand a measuring reed of six cubits long by the cubit and an hand breadth: so he measured the breadth of the building, one reed; and the height, one reed.

**Zechariah 2:5** (Parallel theme): For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.

**Ezekiel 44:23** (Parallel theme): And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.

**Ezekiel 48:15** (Parallel theme): And the five thousand, that are left in the breadth over against the five and twenty thousand, shall be a profane place for the city, for dwelling, and for suburbs: and the city shall be in the midst thereof.

**Isaiah 60:18** (Parallel theme): Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.