

CHAPTER 42

INTRODUCTION TO EZEKIEL 42

In this chapter are a description of some chambers in the northern part of the outward court, (^{<3401>}Ezekiel 42:1-12), an account of the use made of them by the priests, (^{<3403>}Ezekiel 42:13,14), the measuring of the area, or whole compass of ground, on which the whole building before measured stood, with the wall that surrounded it, (^{<3415>}Ezekiel 41:15-20).

Ver. 1. *Then he brought me forth into the utter court, the way toward the north, &c.]* After the dimensions of the gates and courts of this building had been shown, and that of itself, the holy and most holy place, with the ornaments thereof; the prophet is brought by his guide into the outward court, which encompassed the building to the north part of it; probably he came out of the north gate of the house into it. So the Targum renders it,

“by the way of the gate which is open to the way of the north:”

and he brought me into the chamber that was over against the separate place; or holy of holies; (see ^{<3412>}Ezekiel 41:12), over against or before this, to the north of it, were a chamber or chambers; the singular being put for the plural; whither the prophet was brought to take a view of, being a new and distinct building from all others he had seen before; unto one of them, or to the place of them, as Jarchi, where they stood: there were two rows of them opposite to each other, and a walk between them; they are afterwards called the north and south chambers, (^{<3503>}Ezekiel 42:13):

and which was before the building toward the north; this chamber or chambers were over against or before the whole fabric, to the north of it. The Jews here confess their ignorance, there being nothing in the first or second temple answerable to these. Lipman^{f734} expressly says these chambers were not in the second temple; perhaps they may design the Protestant reformed churches in the northern parts of the world; the religion of Protestants is by the Papists called the northern heresy: and if our northern churches are here pointed at and described, it is a great honour that is done them, to have a particular apartment allotted them in this wonderful building; compare (^{<3482>}Psalms 48:2).

Ver. 2. *Before the length of an hundred cubits was the north door, &c.]* That is, the north door of the house opened to a space that lay between that and the chambers, which was a hundred cubits long:

and the breadth was fifty cubits; or the sense is, that the prophet was brought, as Noldius renders the words ^{f735},

to a place whose length was an hundred cubits towards the north door; so that they describe the length and breadth of these chambers, the whole of them; and to this agrees the Arabic version: this account of them makes them larger than Solomon's temple, (^{<100>}1 Kings 6:2), which may signify the largeness of these churches; the number of men in them; and the abundance of spiritual blessings and privileges, of light and knowledge, peace and joy, possessed by them: but the measure being oblong, and not foursquare, as the city of the New Jerusalem, (^{<6216>}Revelation 21:16), shows they are not yet come to stability and perfection.

Ver. 3. *Over against the twenty cubits which were for the inner court, &c.]* Starckius thinks that the breadth of the chambers being fifty cubits, is here parted, and disposed of, and accounted for. The chambers were in two rows over against each other; that row which looked to the south, and so to the temple, was twenty cubits broad; and because it led to the temple, its court is called the inner court:

and over against the pavement which was for the utter court: or that row which was over against the pavement of the outward court, to the north, was also twenty cubits broad, which make forty; and the walk of ten cubits between them, (^{<2604>}Ezekiel 42:4), account for the breadth of the fifty cubits:

was gallery against gallery in three stories; or, there was

post before post in three stories ^{f736}; each chamber had a post or pillar, so Jarchi; which distinguished or divided one from another, and ran up with the chambers three storey high; and as the chambers, so these posts in both rows answered to one another. These may denote the ministers of the Gospel, who are as pillars in the house of God, and churches of Christ; and every distinct church has its pillar or pastor, (^{<2000>}Proverbs 9:1).

Ver. 4. *And before the chambers was a walk of ten cubits' breadth inward, &c.]* That is, within side, or between the two rows of chambers, there was a walk of this breadth, for those that lodged in the chambers to

walk in for their pleasure and profit, and to converse with one another. Such who by these “chambers” understand places of retirement for private devotion, or the duties of the closet, which fit and prepare for public worship, as these chambers were near and in sight of the temple, so by this walk then Christian conference and conversation is intended; and shows, that the whole of religious time is not to be spent between the church and the chamber; but some part of it should be allotted for spiritual discourse, about gracious experiences, the truths of the Gospel, and the duties of religion; but as chambers design churches, this walk denotes the outward walk and conversation of the saints; which should be according to the rule of God’s word, as becomes the Gospel, and worthy of the calling wherewith they are called. Starckius applies this to the decalogue or ten commandments, which is a broad way, (^{<1992>}Psalm 119:32,96) and the moral law, as in the hands of Christ, is a rule of walk and conversation to believers under the Gospel: and besides, there “was a way of one cubit”; which led into the chambers, and out of them into the broad walk: this is a narrow way, as Christ is said to be, (^{<1074>}Matthew 7:14) and whoever profess faith in him, and in this way enter into a Gospel church state, and into the kingdom of heaven, must be attended with much affliction and persecution, and pass through many tribulations; and there being both a broad walk and a narrow way, and these lying near one another, and a passage from the one to the other, may denote that the churches and people of God are sometimes in prosperity, and sometimes in adversity; one while they walk at liberty, as in a large place; and at other times in great straits and difficulties:

and their doors toward the north; that is, the doors of that row of chambers nearest the temple; these opened to the north into the walk of ten cubits; though one would think that the row opposite to them, their doors must be to the south, into the broad walk between them; unless this is to be understood of the doors that opened into the way of one cubit, and were to the north in both rows; but then the way of one cubit could not in both lead into the broad walk.

Ver. 5. *Now the upper chambers were shorter*, &c.] The chambers were in three stories, as in the following verse, one above another; the middlemost were shorter than the lowermost, and the upper shorter than either; just the reverse of the chambers in (^{<25107>}Ezekiel 41:7), they were not so high from the floor to the ceiling, nor so broad from side to side. The reason follows:

for the galleries were higher than these; or, “ate out of these”^{f737}, “than the lower, and than the middlemost of the building”; the meaning is, that the galleries or balconies in the middlemost and upper chambers were taken, out of them, and so made them lesser than the lower ones, and the upper ones lesser than either; or the posts or pillars, as the word may be rendered, (see ^{340B}Ezekiel 42:3), which supported the chambers, took more out of the uppermost than the others, and so made them shorter. This may signify the diversity of gifts and grace, of light and knowledge, and of liberty and comfort, in the churches; and that, as those that are uppermost have most light, they are usually the least, and fewest members in them; who are the few names in Sardis, (^{400B}Revelation 3:4), and are generally more straitened, afflicted, reproached, and persecuted.

Ver. 6. *For they were in three stories*, &c.] Not only the galleries or posts, but the chambers; they were one over another; there were the lowermost, middlemost, and uppermost; which, as before, may denote the difference in churches, and the different states, conditions, and characters of those that are in them; some being fathers, others young men, and others little children: or their different offices and relations; some being pastors, others deacons, and others private members: or their knowledge of and profession of faith in the doctrine of the Trinity, the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; and their being baptized in the name of the three divine Persons; and their being built on Christ the foundation, a habitation for God through the Spirit:

but had not pillars as the pillars of the courts; those which supported the porticos and galleries in the courts of the temple, not pillars so thick and strong as they: so the churches represented by these chambers, though they have Gospel ministers, which are as pillars, and valuable members, which are as such, that shall not go out; yet they have not those external supports from great and rich men, but consist generally of the poor of this world, as churches on a civil establishment have, who are supported by the state:

therefore the building was straitened more than the lowest and the middlemost from the ground; the upper part of it, or the uppermost chambers, were more straitened, and had less room in them, than the middlemost, and the middlemost than the lowest; suggesting, that the more heavenly and spiritual men are, the farther they depart from the men of the world and their conversation, from the sentiments and practices of natural

men, the more they are exposed to their scorn and contempt, and are the more afflicted and straitened by them.

Ver. 7. *And the wall that was without over against the chambers, &c.]*

This wall separated and distinguished the chambers from the outward court, as well as was a protection of them; and signifies the grace and power of God, which separates his true churches from the world, and is the security of them; (see Gill on “^{391B}Ezekiel 11:5”)

this was towards the utter court, on the fore part of the chambers; or front of them, which seems to be to the north of them; since their doors were towards the north, (^{391B}Ezekiel 42:4), though Cocceius makes it to be to the west, which better agrees with what follows:

the length thereof was fifty cubits; which answers to the breadth of the chambers, (^{391D}Ezekiel 42:2) and what is called length here, with respect to the wall, is called the breadth with respect to the chambers. The wall of divine protection is equal to the length and breadth, and even the whole compass, of the churches of Christ.

Ver. 8. *For the length of the chambers that were in the utter court was fifty cubits, &c.]* Which was the reason why the wall was of the same length, that it might be answerable to them; here length is put for breadth; (see ^{391D}Ezekiel 42:2), this measure was from the north to south, as Lipman^{f738} observes:

and lo, before the temple were an hundred cubits; as the breadth of the wall and chambers was fifty, so in length, as they were over against the temple, they were an hundred cubits, as in (^{391D}Ezekiel 42:2), unless the account is to be taken thus; that the row of chambers towards the north were fifty cubits long, and the row towards the south over against the other was fifty cubits, and so both made a hundred; to which sense is the Septuagint version,

“for the length of the chambers that look to the outward court was fifty cubits, and those (that is, those that looked to the temple, or were before that) answered to them, the whole a hundred cubits;”

that is, both rows made a hundred cubits; but rather, as Lipman^{f739} says, the chambers contained from east to west a hundred cubits.

Ver. 9. *And from under these chambers, &c.*] Or, “from the lower part of these chambers”^{f740}; or, “from the lowest” of them there was a space, as may be supplied, and as is by Cocceius and Starchius; and as there was a wall to the west of them, so there was a void space to the east; and as follows:

the entry on the east side: or, “he that brought me from the east”^{f741}, as the Keri; and coming eastward to these chambers, one must needs go through this space:

as one goeth into them from the utter court; if a man went eastward into those chambers from the outward court he must go through this space, which lay to the east of the lowest chambers: or the sense is, that from under the north chambers to the south was an entry on the east side, which led from one to the other.

Ver. 10. *The chambers were in the thickness of the wall of the court toward the east, &c.*] As there were chambers in the northern part of the outward court, some which looked to the north, and others to the south, so likewise some to the east; and these were built on the breadth, as it may be rendered, of the court wall to the east; signifying there will be churches raised in all the northern parts of the world:

over against the separate place, and over against the building; as the other chambers were; (see Gill on “~~350~~ Ezekiel 42:1”).

Ver. 11. *And the way before them was like the appearance of the chambers which were toward the north, &c.*] The way before these eastern chambers was exactly like to that of the northern chambers; which was either the way of one cubit into them, or the walk of ten cubits before them, or both; signifying that the way into Gospel churches is the same everywhere, and the walk and conversation of the saints the same in all places:

as long as they, and as broad as they; which seems to confirm that both the way and the walk are meant, which were the same in those eastern chambers as in the northern; the way being as long, of one cubit, and the walk as broad, of ten cubits:

and all their goings out were both according to their fashions, and according to their doors; the form and fashion of them were alike; they were built three stories high, were as long, and as broad, and the upper

shorter than the middlemost and lowest; the way of going into them, and coming out of them, were just the same; their doors were in the same position: in Gospel churches there are the same ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper; the same laws and rules; the same privileges and immunities; the same graces in the members of them, like precious faith, hope, and love; whatever difference there may be in temporal things, there is none in spiritual ones; be they rich or poor, their communion is equal, their benefits the same.

Ver. 12. *And according to the doors of the chambers that were toward the south, &c.*] That is, the doors of these eastern chambers were exactly like to the doors of the southern chambers, as well as to the northern ones:

was a door in the head of the way; or beginning of the way; the door opened into the way of one cubit, and that led into the walk of ten cubits; and such a way and walk were before these eastern chambers as were before the southern and northern ones:

even the way directly before the wall toward the east, as one entereth into them: or, "also a way before the wall direct, a way to the east, as one goes into them"^{f742}; which seems to describe such a way from under these eastern chambers as were from under the northern or southern chambers, (³⁴⁰Ezekiel 42:9).

Ver. 13. *Then said he unto me, &c.*] The divine Person that measured and described these chambers, and brought the prophet to take a view of them, said to him, as follows:

the north chambers, and the south chambers, which are before the separate place, they be holy chambers; these are the two rows of chambers before described, which were southward and northward to each other, though both in the northern part of the outward court; these were for holy persons to dwell in, and for holy things to be done in, as the churches of Christ are; they consist of holy persons, men called with a holy calling, and in them the holy word of God is preached, and holy ordinances administered:

where the priests that approach unto the Lord shall eat the most holy things; which is to be understood not of the ministers of the Gospel, for whom a proper maintenance is to be provided, and who should live of the Gospel they preach; but of all the saints, who are made priests to God by Christ; and who approach unto the Lord by him, in his name and

righteousness, and by the faith of him, with true hearts, in a spiritual manner; and which is profitable to themselves, and acceptable to God; for whom spiritual provisions are made in his house: these have most holy things to eat of, the holy word of God, the law part of which is holy, just, and good; and the Gospel part is our most holy faith, which is food for faith, savoury and salutary, milk for babes, and meat for strong men; and which is found and eaten, and digested by them: also our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the most holy, and is the sum and substance of the word and ordinances, and the food of believers, the bread of life, the hidden manna, the Lamb of God, and fatted calf; whose flesh and blood are meat and drink indeed, and are eaten and fed upon by faith.

There shall they lay the most holy things; lay up the word of God in their minds and memories, and remember the love of God, his sufferings and death, and the benefits arising from them, particularly in the ordinance of the supper:

and the meat offering; the “minchah”, or bread offering, made of fine flour, typical of Christ, the bread of life:

and the sin, offering, and the trespass offering; both typical of Christ, made sin for his people; and who, by one sacrifice of himself, has made atonement for it, and an end of it; (see Gill on “²⁶¹⁹Ezekiel 40:39”), these were called the most holy things, and were laid up in the sanctuary for the priests and their families to live upon, (¹⁸⁶⁷Leviticus 6:17):

for the place is holy: the place of these chambers holy, as the temple itself, where these most holy things and holy persons were.

Ver. 14. *When the priests enter therein, &c.*] Into the holy place, these holy chambers, and approach unto God, and eat of the most holy things, and minister therein to the Lord:

then shall they not go out of the holy place into the utter court; denoting, not that the ministers of the word should not concern themselves in secular employments, but give themselves up to the word and prayer, though so to do is right; but the perseverance of the saints in the house and worship of God, in grace and holiness, and in all the duties of religion; these should not relinquish their profession, desert their station and the service of God, and return to the world; but continue as pillars in the temple of God, and go no more out, but abide by the truths and ordinances of the Gospel:

but there they shall lay their garments wherein they minister, for they are holy; these signify Christ's robe of righteousness and garments of salvation, that fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints; and fitly represented by the linen garments of the priests, in which they ministered in their office, and were like them holy, pure, and spotless; in these only saints appear before God, and present their supplications to him, not for their own, but for Christ's righteousness sake, making mention of that only; and herein they have acceptance with God now, and shall be introduced into his presence hereafter, and behold his face, clothed with these garments, and serve him for ever:

and shall put on other garments, and shall approach to those things which are for the people; these are the conversation garments of the saints, which are not fit to appear in before God, being attended with imperfection and sin; but very proper to appear in before men, among whom their lights should shine, and their good works be seen, for the adorning of the doctrine of Christ, the recommending of the Christian religion, and the stopping of the mouths of gainsayers: for this respects not the different habits of ministers, when they are in their ministrations, and out of them; though the allusion is to the priests under the law, who wore their priestly garments only in the temple, and while ministering there, and never elsewhere, or when among the common people on civil accounts: so Josephus says^{f743}, the priests only wore their holy garments when they ministered; at other times they appeared in the habit of private persons; with which agrees what Maimonides^{f744} says, their garments are not upon them when they are not ministering in the priestly office, but then they are clothed as laymen; or when, as the Targum here has it,

“they were mingled with the people.”

There were places in the temple where they put on and off their clothes, and where they were laid up. So Adrichomius^{f745} says, speaking of the temple,

“there were rooms, otherwise called treasuries, and priests' apartments, which were houses on the side of it, like towers, long, broad, and high; in which the priests, when they went into the sanctuary, put off their common woollen garments, and put on their holy linen ones; and, when they had performed their holy services, laid them up there again.”

And another writer, quoted by Solomon Ben Virga^{f746}, observes, that

“here (that is, the temple) was a house for the priest whose office it was to clothe the rest of the priests at the time of service; and he gave to everyone of them four sorts of garments, as were commanded, and fetched them out of the chests of the wardrobe; and on every chest, which were at the walls of this house, that is, above everyone of them, was the name of the garment, that there might be no mistake nor confusion when they were wanted.”

And this agrees with what is said in the Misnah^{f747}, that there was one that was appointed over the priests’ garments, and who might be properly enough called the master of the wardrobe; on which one of the commentators says^{f748}, his business was

“to clothe the priests at the time of service, and to unclothe them after service was done, and to keep the garments of the priesthood in the chambers made for that purpose.”

Very wrongly, therefore, is the learned Selden^{f749} charged by Mr. Shoringham^{f750}, with a mistake, in denying that the priests wore their holy garments at any other time but when they were at divine service.

Ver. 15. *Now when he had made an end of measuring the inner house,* &c.] The holy place, and the holy of holies, with all the courts and chambers belonging to them; even the whole building within the compass of the outermost wall, and all that pertained unto it; the chambers last mentioned, as well as the rest, the dimensions of, which are given in this and the two preceding chapters:

he brought me forth toward the gate whose prospect is toward the east: not to the east gate of the outward wall, but to the east gate which led into the outward court; the gate he was first brought unto, and which was first measured, (³⁴⁰⁶Ezekiel 40:6): and measured it round about; not the east gate, nor the outward wall that went all round the house; though this was measured, and its dimensions given, last of all; nor the house itself, which had been measured already; or the figure of it, as the Septuagint and Arabic versions; but all that space that was between this building and the wall that surrounded it; the area or compass of ground on which the building stood.

Ver. 16. *He measured the east side,* &c.] He began with that, being at the east gate: the building was foursquare, and so was the wall about it, and

had each four equilateral sides, which were separately measured; here the east side, from the two angles of it, the north and south points:

with the measuring reed; which consisted of six cubits, and which cubits were larger than the common sort by a hand's breadth; so that a measuring reed measured three yards and a half: and the whole measure of the east side were

five hundred reeds: which make one thousand seven hundred and fifty yards:

with the measuring reed round about; not round about the building, since only one side, as yet, was measured; but round about that side, or from angle to angle, or from one side to the other: having finished one side, he went to another, until he had measured all round; but did not go four times round it, only once.

Ver. 17. *He measured the north side, five hundred reeds, &c.*] From the two angles of that side, east and west; and it was of the same dimension as the east side, just five hundred reeds, or one thousand seven hundred and fifty yards:

with a measuring reed round about; he measured with the same reed, from point to point; and having measured this side, he went to another.

Ver. 18. *He measured the south side, five hundred reeds, &c.*] From the two angles of that side, east and west; and it amounted to just the same number of reeds, even five hundred reeds, or one thousand seven hundred and fifty yards:

with the measuring reed; the same as before; here, and in the next verse, the phrase "round about" is not used, but is to be understood; and having been repeated, there was no need of mentioning it again.

Ver. 19. *He turned about to the west side, &c.*] And took the dimensions of that, from angle to angle, the south and north points of it:

and measured five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed; and it was exactly of the same measure with the other three sides.

Ver. 20. *He measured it by the four sides, &c.*] Which were equilateral, parallel to each other, each measuring five hundred reeds; which in all made up two thousand reeds, or seven thousand yards: this shows that no

material building can be designed; never was an edifice of such dimensions; this seems rather to describe a city than a temple; and denotes the largeness of the Gospel church state in the latter day, when the Jews will be converted, and the fulness of the Gentiles brought in:

it had a wall round about: the same with that in (³⁶⁰⁵Ezekiel 40:5):

five hundred reeds long, and five hundred broad; it was foursquare, as the building was, and exactly answered to that in its dimensions. The Jews say^{f751} the mountain of the house was five hundred cubits by five hundred; that is, a perfect square of five hundred cubits on every side, two thousand cubits in the whole compass about. Josephus^{f752} says the whole circuit was half a mile, every side containing the length of a two hundred and twenty yards. Now, says Doctor Lightfoot^{f753}, if any will take up the full circuit of the wall that encompassed the holy ground, according to our English measure, it will amount to half a mile and about one hundred and sixty six yards; and whosoever will likewise measure the square of Ezekiel, (³⁶²⁰Ezekiel 42:20), will find it six times as large as this, (³⁶⁰⁵Ezekiel 40:5), the whole amounting to three miles and a half, and about one hundred and forty yards, a compass incomparably larger than Mount Moriah divers times over; and by this very thing is showed that that is spiritually and mystically to be understood; wherefore these measures no doubt did, as Mr. Lee^{f754} observes, signify the great fulness of the Gentiles, and that compass of the church in Gospel days should be marvellously extended. The use of it was,

to make a separation between the sanctuary and the profane place: the church and the world; the world is profane, and lies in wickedness, and the men of it ought not to be admitted into the church of God, and partake of holy things in it; a difference must be made between the precious and the vile; and greater care will be taken in the latter day of the admission of members into Gospel churches, (²⁸⁰¹Isaiah 52:1), (see Gill on “³⁶⁰⁵Ezekiel 40:5”).