**Tabernacles and the Gates of Jerusalem**

Pastor Emeritus, October 26, 2016

Last week our focus was upon the Tabernacle particularly at Shiloh. Tonight we will go to the Temple in Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles. Telling that story will take us through one of the gates of Jerusalem which will provide our launch point into the gates of Jerusalem.

First, I want to consider the Feast of Tabernacles.

It was God who set an original requirement of living in booths as part of the Feast of Tabernacles partly so people could remember how difficult they had it. (Leviticus 23:42-43) “*All native-born Israelites are to live in booths so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the Lord your God*.'"

The original Feast of Tabernacles was a way to remember what God had done. In the wilderness God fed them with fresh manna every day except the Sabbath. Tabernacles celebrated God’s provision from the land of milk and honey. The Promised Land was productive and the people were to celebrate the harvest in God’s presence.

Tabernacles also harkened back to the pillar of light in the wilderness in remembrance of the time that God tabernacled with his people Israel as they lived in booths in the desert. On every count it was and is a tremendous time of rejoicing. The people actually lived in their harvest booths for seven days as they rejoiced before God.

Over the course of Israel’s history, two additional elements in the Tabernacles celebration involved fire and water. This is reflected in I Kings 8 where we are told that Solomon dedicated his temple on the Feast of Tabernacles. At the time of the dedication service, Solomon moved the Ark of the Covenant from Mt. Zion to Mt. Moriah and placed it in the temple. Verses 10 and 11 reveal that, “*When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the LORD. And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled his temple.”* The cloud was the Shekinah Glory, a sign of God’s presence.

This extremely significant event of Israel’s history led to a lasting commemoration of light, celebrating God’s presence, as part of the Feast of Tabernacles. The prophet Zechariah wrote of a time when God will dwell with his people and his light will be the light of the world: “*On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost. It will be a unique day, without daytime or nighttime--a day known to the LORD. When evening comes, there will be light.”* Zechariah 14:6-7. The light looked back to the wilderness and forward to the Day of the Lord but in each case it represented the presence of the Lord.

In the Temple of Herod, the light was on particularly brilliant display from the giant candelabra on Temple Mount. Edersheim said a person could read a book on the Mount of Olives by the light of the candelabra on Temple Mount. The light would stream out from the Temple to light those who came near.

Solomon’s dedication of the temple also introduced another element to the Feast of Tabernacles: water. Included in Solomon’s temple dedication speech was a petition for rain on behalf of Israel: *"When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because your people have sinned against you, and when they pray toward this place and confess your name and turn from their sin because you have afflicted them, then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel. Teach them the right way to live, and send rain on the land you gave your people for an inheritance.”* I Kings 8:35-36

Since Israel was a farming community, rain was critical to their survival. Thus an annual prayer for rain was instituted as part of the Tabernacle celebration and a water offering was begun. The water libation became so significant that during the time of the feast the temple was called the “house of outpouring.” The prophet Zechariah, in speaking of the day of the Lord said*, “On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem...”* (Zechariah 14:8).

When Jesus came he brought the fire and water into a unique perspective. Since fire represented the presence of God in the temple, the very presence of Jesus on Temple Mount fulfilled that aspect of it. He also fulfilled the water aspect.

I would like to show pictures of the physical locations of the water ceremony. In biblical times, there was a special water ceremony for the Feast of Tabernacles. In fact, the water gate, one of the city gates, got its name from this ceremony. The priests paraded to the Pool of Siloam to fill a golden pitcher with water. Amidst great fanfare and the blowing of the silver trumpets, they returned to the altar in the Temple. Then two drink offerings were simultaneously poured out. The Siloam water was poured into one silver funnel that drained to the bottom of the altar. At the same time, wine was poured into an identical funnel that also drained to the bottom. Wine and water poured out at the base of the altar, just as at Calvary, the blood and water would mix at the base of the cross.

As a feature of the water ceremony, the people would remember Solomon’s prayer as they fell silent and prayed the words of Isaiah 44:3. *"For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams*."

At the moment of silence, "Jesus stood up and said in a loud voice...." "*If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." 39 By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified*.”

This was a momentous moment showing that Jesus was fulfilling the Feast of Tabernacles. Of course, the final fulfillment will come when Jesus returns to the earth and again tabernacles with his people.

Going back to an earlier moment there was the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem after the Babylonian Captivity. One of the very significant moments in that revival took place in association with the Water Gate. Nehemiah 7:73-8:3 “*When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns, 8 all the people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded for Israel. 2 So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. 3 He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.”*

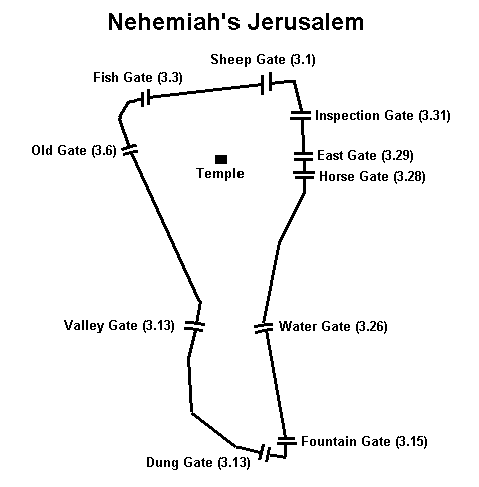
The Water Gate was a part of the revival under Nehemiah and the Water Gate was witness to Jesus in the Temple in his day.

Tabernacles also looks forward to the return of Christ when he will again be with us on this earth as he was in the wilderness and in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle and Temples. Even though it will be fulfilled in the future, yet it remains an important idea for us now.

There is tremendous fear in the world today. People are scared at a lot of levels. It is as Jesus predicted in Luke 21:25-28 “*There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. 26 Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. 27 At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near*."

All this is moving in a direction of God’s Kingdom on the earth. That is the vision of Zechariah 14 “*2 I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city. 3 Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. 4 On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. 5 You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him. 6 On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost. 7 It will be a unique day, without daytime or nighttime — a day known to the Lord. When evening comes, there will be light.8 On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea and half to the western sea, in summer and in winter. 9 The Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one Lord, and his name the only name. 10 The whole land, from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem, will become like the Arabah. But Jerusalem will be raised up and remain in its place, from the Benjamin Gate to the site of the First Gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the royal winepresses. 11 It will be inhabited; never again will it be destroyed. Jerusalem will be secure. 12 This is the plague with which the Lord will strike all the nations that fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths. 13 On that day men will be stricken by the Lord with great panic. Each man will seize the hand of another, and they will attack each other. 14 Judah too will fight at Jerusalem. The wealth of all the surrounding nations will be collected — great quantities of gold and silver and clothing. 15 A similar plague will strike the horses and mules, the camels and donkeys, and all the animals in those camps. 16 Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. 17 If any of the peoples of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, they will have no rain. 18 If the Egyptian people do not go up and take part, they will have no rain. The Lord will bring on them the plague he inflicts on the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. 19 This will be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.*

The gates of Jerusalem were important in the past just as the twelve gates of the new Jerusalem that comes down from heaven will be important. I would like to take you for a walk through those gates as they exist today.

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