



Marshall McLuhan

Atonement 2025 - The Medium is the Message

In 1964, a Canadian philosopher, futurist, & communications theorist became famous when he came up with the idea “the medium is the message”. He says:

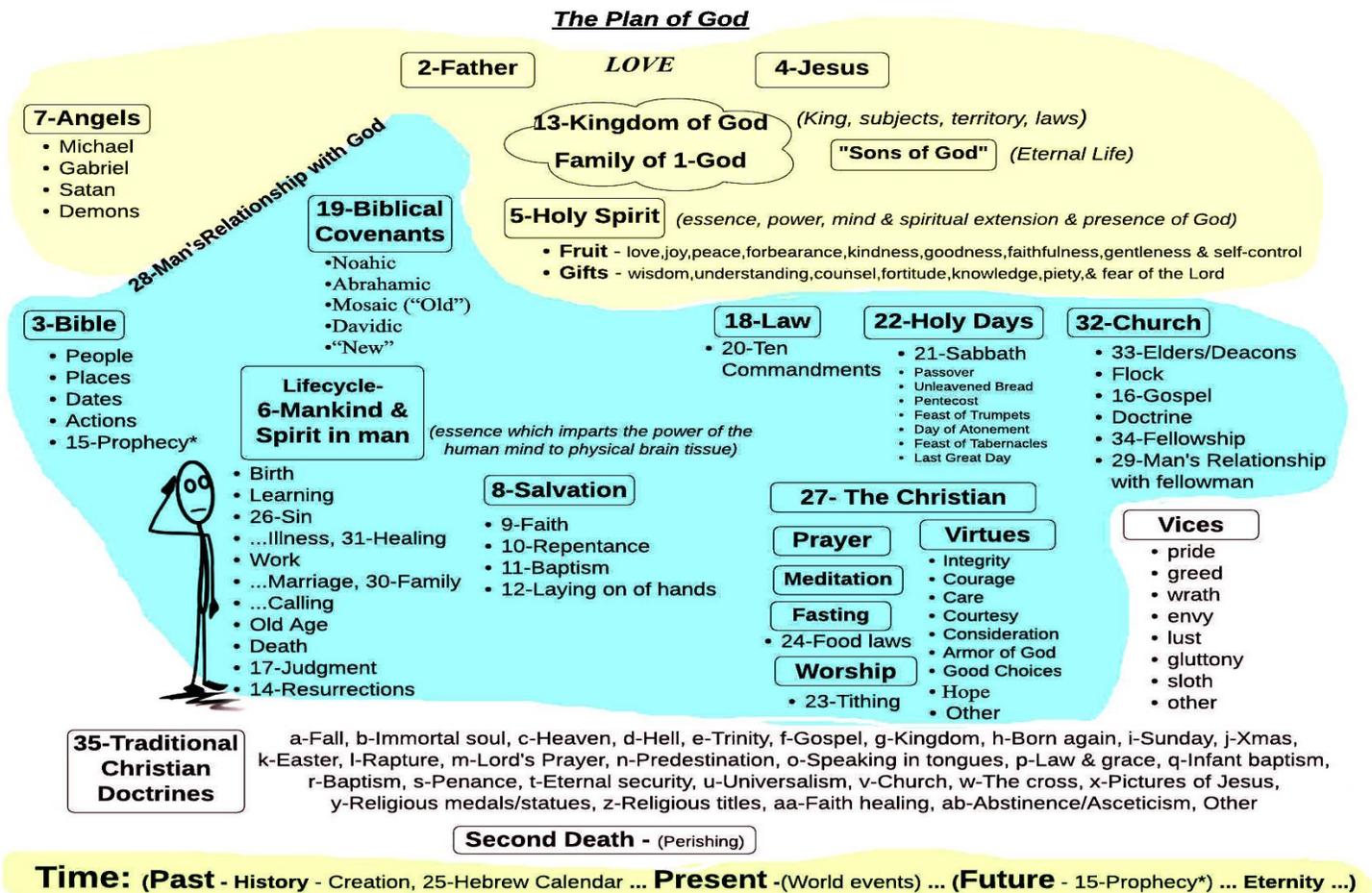
- Media (TV, Radio, Books, Newspapers, etc) are means of extending & enlarging our organic “sense lives” (*senses*) into our environment
- All media **work us over** completely. They are so pervasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical, and social consequences that they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered.

Each “medium” *tells us things* about the message we are about to receive.

- Reading something in a **newspaper** ... tells us we are going to get a certain type of content
- Getting a personal **handwritten letter** ... tells us something else
- Getting a **telegram** tells us even more! (immediate, very important, costly to send)

With the Day of Atonement ... we experience it altogether differently from every other Holy Day because instead of “Feasting” all day -- we are “Fasting” all day. Experiencing the day via the medium of Fasting. **Might it be said???... the act of fasting IS a big part of the message?**

In today’s sermon let’s explore all of the ways the medium of *the biblical practice of fasting* on the Day of Atonement communicates many of the messages God wants us to experience on this day.



The Day of Atonement

Lev 23:26 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

Lev 23:27 "Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a **holy convocation** for you; you shall **afflict your souls**, and **offer an offering** made by fire to the LORD.

Lev 23:28 And you shall **do no work** on that same day, for it is the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God.

Lev 23:29 For any person who is not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be **cut off** from his people.

Lev 23:30 And any person who **does any work** on that same day, that person **I will destroy** from among his people.

Lev 23:31 You shall do no manner of work; it shall be a **statute forever** throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

Lev 23:32 It shall be to you a **sabbath of solemn rest**, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath."

*How does the medium of **fasting, silence, and restriction** itself communicate God's message — apart from the words spoken?*

1. **It's uniqueness** ... fasting (vs 27) itself conveys:

- humility,
- dependence, &
- need for cleansing



2. **Embodied communication**

- Instead of speaking repentance only with words, the medium of fasting communicates it through the body.
- The absence of eating **embodies** the message of weakness before God.

3. **Time structure as message**

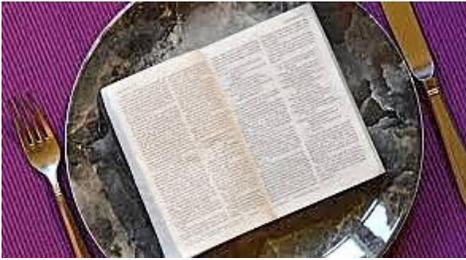
- A complete 24-hour fast (sunset to sunset) sends the message of holiness, set-apartness, and seriousness.
- The medium of a defined time frame shapes the worshipper's perception of God's appointed seasons.

4. **Silencing "the normal" to highlight "the holy"**

- The medium of fasting strips away ordinary rhythms (meals, pleasure, strength).
- The very absence becomes the message: "This day is not about the usual; it is about reconciliation with God."

5. **Equality across the community**

- Everyone — rich or poor, strong or weak — participates in the same medium of self-denial.
- The medium itself levels social differences, sending the message that *all are equally in need of atonement*.



6. Spiritual posture over verbal expression

- Instead of *saying* “I am humble,” the medium of fasting *forms* humility.
- The Day’s meaning is communicated *more* through action (fasting) than through speech.

7. Dependence on God is amplified by the medium

- Hunger and weakness highlight human frailty.
- The medium of fasting makes the worshipper’s dependence on God the central message.
- We experience the day through sensory deprivation - Atonement removes food, drink, work, pleasures — a kind of spiritual “fasting of the senses” - we stand bare before God



8. Pointing beyond itself

- The medium of fasting is temporary — but it points to the greater message of ultimate reconciliation through Christ (Heb. 9–10).
- The practice of fasting on Atonement (medium) is a shadow, but the true message is:
 - ✓ forgiveness,
 - ✓ cleansing, &
 - ✓ life in Him

2 More points to follow ... at the end of the sermon ...

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The Day of Atonement

Lev 16:1 Now the LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered profane fire before the LORD, and died;

Lev 16:2 and the LORD said to Moses: "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at just any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud above the mercy seat.

Lev 16:3 "Thus Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with the blood of a young bull as a sin offering, and of a ram as a burnt offering.

Lev 16:4 He shall put the holy linen tunic and the linen trousers on his body; he shall be girded with a linen sash, and with the linen turban he shall be attired. These are holy garments. Therefore he shall wash his body in water, and put them on.

Lev 16:5 And he shall take from the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats as a sin offering, and one ram as a burnt offering.

Lev 16:6 "Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house.

Lev 16:7 He shall take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

Lev 16:8 Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the LORD and the other lot for the scapegoat.



Lev 16:9 And Aaron shall bring the goat on which the LORD's lot fell, and offer it as a sin offering.

Lev 16:10 But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make atonement upon it, and to let it go as the scapegoat into the wilderness.

Lev 16:11 "And Aaron shall bring the bull of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house, and shall kill the bull as the sin offering which is for himself.

Lev 16:12 Then he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from the altar before the LORD, with his hands full of sweet incense beaten fine, and bring it inside the veil.

Lev 16:13 And he shall put the incense on the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the Testimony, lest he die.

Lev 16:14 He shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side; and before the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times.

Lev 16:15 "Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, which is for the people, bring its blood inside the veil, do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat.



Lev 16:16 So he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness.

Lev 16:17 There shall be no man in the tabernacle of meeting when he goes in to make atonement in the Holy Place, until he comes out, that he may make atonement for himself, for his household, and for all the assembly of Israel.

Lev 16:18 And he shall go out to the altar that is before the LORD, and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat, and put it on the horns of the altar all around.

Lev 16:19 Then he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, cleanse it, and consecrate it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.

Lev 16:20 "And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place, the tabernacle of meeting, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat.

Lev 16:21 Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man.

Lev 16:22 The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.

Lev 16:23 "Then Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of meeting, shall take off the linen garments which he put on when he went into the Holy Place, and shall leave them there.

Lev 16:24 And he shall wash his body with water in a holy place, put on his garments, come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people, and make atonement for himself and for the people.

Lev 16:25 The fat of the sin offering he shall burn on the altar.

Lev 16:26 And he who released the goat as the scapegoat shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp.

Lev 16:27 The bull for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy Place, shall be carried outside the camp. And they shall burn in the fire their skins, their flesh, and their offal.

Lev 16:28 Then he who burns them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp.

Lev 16:29 "This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you.

Lev 16:30 For on that day the priest shall make **atonement for you**, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the LORD.

Lev 16:31 It is a sabbath of solemn rest for you, and you shall afflict your souls. It is a statute forever.

Lev 16:32 And the priest, who is anointed and consecrated to minister as priest in his father's place, shall make atonement, and put on the linen clothes, the holy garments;

Lev 16:33 then he shall make atonement for the Holy Sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tabernacle of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly.

Lev 16:34 This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to **make atonement** for the children of Israel, for all their sins, **once a year.**" And he did as the LORD commanded Moses.



Vestments

Exodus 28:2-4



Jesus, High Priest of a Better Covenant

Heb 8:1 Now this is the **main point** of the things we are saying: **We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,**

Heb 8:2 a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.

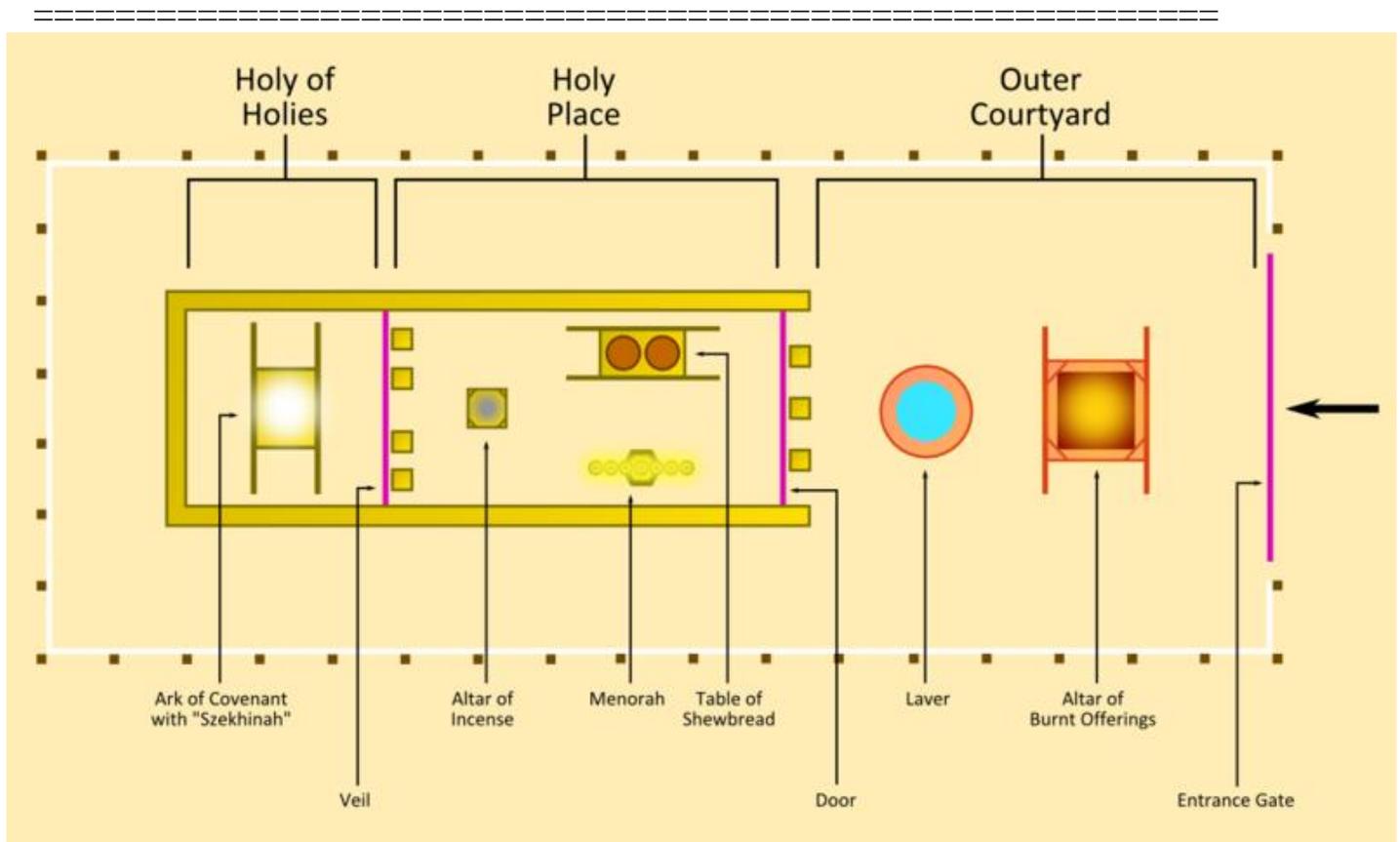
Heb 8:3 For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer.

Heb 8:4 For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law;

Heb 8:5 who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "SEE THAT YOU MAKE ALL THINGS ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN."

Heb 8:6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as **He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.**

Heb 8:7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.



The Earthly Holy Place

Heb 9:1 Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary.

Heb 9:2 For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary;

Heb 9:3 and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All,

Heb 9:4 which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant;

Heb 9:5 and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

Heb 9:6 Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services.

Heb 9:7 But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance;

Heb 9:8 the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing.

Heb 9:9 It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—

Heb 9:10 concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.

Redemption Through the Blood of Christ

Heb 9:11 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.

Heb 9:12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, **but with His own blood He entered** the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

Heb 9:13 For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh,

Heb 9:14 **how much more** shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Heb 9:15 And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

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Christ's Sacrifice Once for All

Heb 10:11 And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

Heb 10:12 But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God,

Heb 10:13 from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.

**Be seated, God will
make all your enemies
your footstool.**

Psalm 110:1

Reasons for Fasting in Scripture

1. Repentance / Returning to God - Joel 2:12-13 “Now, therefore,” says the Lord, “Turn to Me with all your heart, With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.” So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness. And He relents from doing harm.

2. Humbling Oneself Before God - Psalm 35:13 But as for me, when they were sick, My clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting...
And my prayer would return to my own heart.

Ezra 8:21 - Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones ...

3. Mourning / Grief - 2 Samuel 12:16 David therefore pleaded with God for the child, and David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground.

4. Intercession / Pleading for Others - Esther 4:16 “Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!”
Daniel 9:3 Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer & supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

5. Seeking God’s Guidance and Wisdom - Acts 13:2–3 As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then, having fasted and prayed, & laid hands on them, they sent them away.

6. Spiritual Warfare / Breaking Strongholds - Mark 9:29 So He said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer & fasting.”



7. Averting or Seeking Relief from Judgment - Jonah 3:5–10

So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them ... But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish? Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

8. Seeking Forgiveness and Restoration (True Fasting Defined) - Isaiah 58:3–7

‘Why have we fasted,’ they say, ‘and You have not seen? Why have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?’ In fact, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, And exploit all your laborers. Indeed you fast for strife and debate, And to strike with the fist of wickedness. You will not fast as you do this day, To make your voice heard on high. Is it a fast that I have chosen, A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, And to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast, And an acceptable day to the Lord? Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke? Is it not to share

your bread with the hungry, And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; When you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh?

9. Preparation for Ministry or Mission - Luke 4:1–2

Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry.

10. Supplication for Deliverance in Crisis - 2 Chronicles 20:3–4 And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. So Judah gathered together to ask help from the Lord; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord.

11. Private Devotion (Not for Show) - Matthew 6:16–18 “Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head & wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; & your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

12. Personal Affliction, Discipline, or Pressing Need - Daniel 10:2–3 In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.

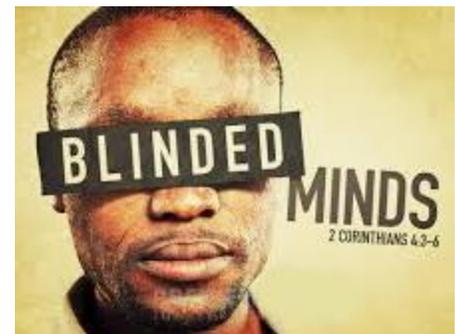
Nehemiah 1:4 - So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

In my Trumpets Sermon ... I mentioned I would cover this in my Atonement message!

1John_3:8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the **works of the devil**.

Extended Summary of the “Works of the Devil”:

- **Deception and lies** (John 8:44; Rev. 12:9)
- **Temptation to sin** (Gen. 3; 1 Thess. 3:5)
- **Accusation** (Rev. 12:10; Job 1)
- **Inflicting suffering** (Job 2:7; Luke 13:16)
- **Blinding minds** (2 Cor. 4:4)
- **False religion** (1 Tim. 4:1)
- **Hindrance** (1 Thess. 2:18)
- **Pride and rebellion** (Isa. 14:12–14)
- **Murder and violence** (John 8:44; 1 John 3:12)
- **Division and strife** (James 3:14–16; Eph. 6:12)
- **Persecution of saints** (Rev. 2:10; 1 Pet. 5:8)
- **Stealing the Word** (Matt. 13:19)
- **Counterfeit wonders** (2 Thess. 2:9–10)
- **Enslaving fear** (Heb. 2:14–15)
- **Corrupting nations** (Ezek. 28:15–17; Dan. 10:13)
- **Promoting lawlessness** (1 John 3:8; 2 Cor. 6:14–15)



My favourite summary of the message of the Fall Holy days written in an email to me by Vance Stinson (years ago)...

First, the Feast of Trumpets pictures Christ's coming as Warrior-King. The beast and false prophet and their followers are defeated, and their ring leader is bound and imprisoned. The Day of Atonement pictures the restoration of Israel, which is the first step toward reconciliation with the world. That takes us to the Feast of Tabernacles.

Now, back to the symbols of Atonement. The meaning of the Day of Atonement was not a mystery to the people who first received the instructions on what to do on that day. Fasting is associated with repentance throughout Scripture, so fasting in connection with atonement (making right) is not a mystery. People need to rend their hearts, not their garments, when they come before Yahweh. The rituals of the day portray some central truths:

- 1) the shedding of blood is required for the remission of sins;
- 2) God promises to remove the Israelites' sins from them "as far as east is from west." ... Notice (in Lev 16) that it is the high priest who makes atonement for Israel. Christ IS a High Priest! The OC high priest is a type of the NC High Priest.

The meaning of the day is very simple and is not a hard-to-grasp mystery that requires distinguishing between "substitutionary" and "punitive" atonement. Here is the **PLAIN TRUTH: What the OC high priest does in the Atonement ritual echoes what the NC High Priest accomplishes for His people.** Period.

Prophetically, the day points to the time when Christ will restore Israel as a nation. The repentant Israelites will gather around the Tabernacle, as it were, and seek reconciliation with God through the true High Priest, whom they will then recognize as their Messiah and Savior. They will recognize that His blood was shed for them, and once they come to Him in repentance and accept that sacrifice (as we "firstfruits" have already done), He will put their sins away from them as far as east is from west. In time, the "law will go forth from Zion, and the Word of the LORD from Jerusalem"—the message of reconciliation will go out to all the families of the earth; the world will become "at one" with God.

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In closing ... returning to the theme that *the medium (of fasting) IS the message*

9. Use role reversal

- Imagine: What if God had commanded a feast instead of a fast?
- How would that have changed the message about sin, holiness, and reconciliation?

10. Frame Atonement through covenant relationship

- Instead of seeing it as just ritual law (with goats & washings & fasting), we might explore the **Atonement with Israel** ... as God's **annual** "marriage counselling session" with His people... A day *not* of doom, but of deep covenant repair.

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And ... although we are still fasting ... I wish you all a **Happy Day of Atonement!**