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INTRODUCTION

What is the Day of Atonement?

Where did it come from?

Why is it important to Christians?

More to the point, what does an ancient Hebrew commemoration called the Day of Atonement have anything to do with Christian believers nearly 3500 years after the day of fasting and prayer began to be observed?

Here is a brief history, leading to the reason why I feel God told me to write a book with the pointed title, *Seven Blessings of Atonement*:

- As part of the Exodus from Egypt, as recorded in Exodus 12, God instituted seven feasts. In Leviticus 23, God additionally instructed the children of Israel to hold seven holy gatherings each year, celebrated during three feast seasons.
- God designed seven "Feasts" for the Israelites (Leviticus 23). These "Feasts" were God's own Holy Days, and there were specific instructions given for their observance. The Hebrew

word translated "Feasts" means appointed times. God Himself orchestrated the sequence and time of each of these feasts.

- The feasts fall into three clusters. The first three feasts—
 Passover, Unleavened Bread, and First Fruits—occur during
 the spring of the year over a period of eight days. Referred
 to collectively as "Passover," Its purpose was (and is) to teach
 the children of Israel how to find and enter God's rest.
- During these times the Israelites were to appear together before the Lord. The Word of God strictly instructed them that they must not appear before Him without an offering. Deuteronomy 16:16 (NKJV) states, "And they shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed."
- The fourth feast of Weeks occurs fifty days later at the beginning of the summer. By New Testament times this feast had come to be known by its Greek name, Pentecost, a word meaning 'fifty.'
- The last three gatherings, the Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Feast of Tabernacles extend over a period of twenty-one days in the fall of the year. They are known collectively as "Tabernacles."
- Each of these feasts was extremely significant for Israel, and they honored God for what He had done. Yet, it is important to remember that every feast points us to the Son of God.
- The Day of Atonement is the most solemn and awe-filled of commemorations. It was a time set aside for national

- and sanctuary cleansing. On this day special sacrifices were offered for atonement or reconciliation.
- The Day of Atonement was fulfilled in Christ Jesus when He died on Calvary's cross. The word, atonement, means reconciliation, and as Christians we now can look toward the day when we will receive full reconcilement between God and His people. That solemnity will be turned into celebration as we see the full manifestation of this feast!
- What a day that will be when the power of the blood of Jesus Christ will bring us as the church to perfection, making an end of all sin, all iniquity, all transgression, when we shall stand perfect on that glorious day.
- God established the Day of Atonement to be kept forever: "So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance" (Exodus 12:11, 14 NKJV). This feast was established not only for the Israelites in the time of their flight from Egypt, but also consecrated as an "appointed (holy) time" each year throughout both the Old and the New Testaments. I will detail more about this in Chapters 1 and 2.
- In 325 A. D, the Roman Emperor Constantine stopped the Day of Atonement as a church practice. Since that time, celebrating the Holy Convocations (the Feasts) has not been observed throughout most of Christianity. This is a travesty that must now be corrected if we are to receive the very special blessings connected with this commemoration!

Lost through the centuries since 325 A. D. is the fact that God promised blessings to those who observe His Feasts. Specifically, those obedient in the Day of Atonement were promised seven blessings—seven specific, supernatural blessings:

- A double portion on the economy
- Financial Blessings
- Restoration
- Special Miracles
- A Divine Presence
- Blessings Upon Your Family
- Deliverance

However, for nearly seventeen centuries, these powerful truths have been mostly ignored and even rejected by Christians. That must change! The time for change is now. There is too much at stake.

For years God has been stirring me to write this book, to tell people how their lives would change dramatically when they restored the Day of Atonement observance and offering. Increasingly, I have been reminded that God sets schedules and time boundaries, especially for His feasts and blessings.

He is poised to pour out these blessings upon your life. As you read *Seven Blessings of the Atonement*, it is time to learn how to unleash these Atonement blessings in your life today.

It is my prayer that God uses the pages of this book to

revolutionize your life, and that He will pour out more blessings than you ever dreamed possible. More than anything, I pray that you will understand why God wants you to receive the seven blessings.

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Rejoice in the Lord your God; For He has given you the former rain faithfully, And He will cause the rain to come down for you—

The former rain, And the latter rain in the first month.

—JOEL 2:23

Before we get into the first blessing of the Atonement a double-portion economy God wants to pour over your life—let us back up a few verses in Joel 2 to get a perspective:

Blow the trumpet in Zion, Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly; Gather the people, Sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather the children and nursing babes; Let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, And the bride from her dressing room. Let the priests, who minister to the Lord, Weep between the porch and the altar; Let them say, "Spare Your people, O Lord, And do not give Your heritage to reproach, That the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'" (verses 15-17)

We are given a powerful illustration of what happens when either a person or a nation follows God's prescribed plan. This happens during the latter or Tabernacles season. "Blow the trumpet in Zion" refers to the Feast of Trumpets, or Rosh Hoshanna. Calling a time of fasting, weeping, and mourning refers to the Day of Atonement. In fact, earlier verses in the same chapter give an even more dramatic portrayal of what should happen in a person's (or nation's) heart as a prelude to what happens (figuratively and literally) in the time leading up to the rejoicing and divine harvest (Feast of Tabernacles), as well as the double-portion economy that happens after the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur:

"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. Who knows if He will turn and relent, And leave a blessing behind Him—A grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord your God? (verses 12-14)

What a picture! We are told to prepare ourselves, to fast, to weep, to mourn, to rend our heart (not the garments—God is interested more on what happens spiritually than all the outward ritual!), to return to the Lord, and to leave an offering.

What happens next defies human logic. It is a supernatural, double-portion economy!

Then the Lord will be zealous for His land, And pity His people. The Lord will answer and say to His people, "Behold, I will send you grain and new wine and oil, And you will be satisfied by them; I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations. But I will remove far from you the northern army, And will drive him away into a barren and desolate land, With his face toward the eastern sea And his back toward the western sea; His stench will come up, And his foul odor will rise, Because he has done monstrous things." Fear not, O land; Be glad and rejoice, For the Lord has done marvelous things! Do not be afraid, you beasts of the field; For the open pastures are springing up, And the tree bears its fruit; The fig tree and the vine yield their strength. Be glad then, you children of Zion, And rejoice in the Lord your God; For He has given you the former rain faithfully, And He will cause the rain to come down for you—The former rain, And the latter rain in the first month. (Joel 2:18-23)

TRUE REPENTANCE

Yes, this passage of Scripture was written directly to Israel. But does that mean it only applies to Jews who lived in the Holy Land when God told Joel to pen these words?

Of course not! The Bible is timeless. It is given to people on a number of levels, some of which we understand now, and others which we will understand better as we "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

We are willing to claim the last part of Joel 2 as God's provision for His people today:

"And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved. (verses 28-32).

What a description of the latter days! Something is getting ready to happen that has never happened. And as it gets darker and darker for the world, it will get brighter and brighter for believers who understand the times.

So if we quote these verses in faith, asking for God's divine provision and outpouring of the Holy Spirit, then why would we ever ignore the earlier part of the chapter—the seven blessings of the Atonement.

God wants to get your attention. He does that by calling you to repentance. He wants you to stop and see exactly where you are now—your deficiencies, your sins, your heart's condition. Before our Father can do all He wants to do, you must be prepared and ready.

A heart filled with the world's philosophy and the personal

corruption that gathers there naturally is not a prepared place for God's double blessing.

Just as the Jews were told to do every year during the ten days leading up the Day of Atonement, it is time—continually— to seek God's face as never before.

There is no mystery here. The Bible is filled with verses to help us grasp the necessity and process of coming clean before the Lord: "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14)

Understandably, since the people of the Old Testament, to whom the passages were originally given, lived in an agriculturally-based society, many of the word pictures are given which focus on farming:

- "For thus says the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem: "Break up your fallow ground, And do not sow among thorns" (Jeremiah 4:3).
- "Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, For it is time to seek the Lord, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you" (Hosea 10:12).

King David, after his greatest, most sinful defeat, finally realized how desperate his spiritual situation had become. In the midst of this realization, he penned these words (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit), as a template for true repentance:

Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom. Purge me

with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness, That the bones You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You. Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation, And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart—These, O God, You will not despise. (Psalm 51:7-17)

In the Old Testament, the two Hebrew verbs for repentance are *shuv* (to return) and *icham* (to feel sorrow). Throughout the Old Testament repentance means confessing your sin to God, making a solemn promise to avoid committing the same sin again, and (as described in Leviticus 5) making prescribed offerings (which is why it is hardly strange that an offering is mentioned in Joel 2:14, just prior to the proclamation of the seven blessings of the Atonement).

In the New Testament, the Greek word for repentance is *metanoia* (a change of heart), and repentance is a central theme. When Jesus sent forth His followers to preach the Gospel, He told them

to call people to repentance (Luke 24:47; Mark 6:12). Teachings concerning repentance are found throughout the New Testament, especially in the writings of the apostles Peter (such as Acts 2:38) and Paul (Acts 20:21).

Repentance is more than an ethereal religious concept. It is the absolutely indispensable condition on which the salvation and redemption of the people of Israel, the church of God, as well as of every individual, depends.

Clearly, God wants everyone to repent: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Acts 17:30 tells us, "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent."

In fact, it is clear that failure on the part of anyone to heed God's call to repentance will result in eternal loss: "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3).

That said, knowing repentance isn't difficult to understand, neither is it difficult to do. It means more than just simply being sorry for something (most people spend a lifetime acknowledging that they mess up a lot). It actually must include an acknowledgement that we cannot make it by ourselves, we must return to God's plan, and we must be willing to change. As simple as it should be, relatively few people practice true repentance because of those pesky ideas about following God's plan, not man's plan, and actually changing from what we want to do to what God desires for us.

As King David experienced, it isn't the outward ritual that makes

a difference. It is a broken spirit, a contrite heart, a life opened and cleansed by the blood of the atoning Lamb of God.

Deuteronomy 4:29-31 offers a powerful illustration of true repentance:

But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the Lord your God and obey His voice (for the Lord your God is a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them.

Take time now, and every day, to come clean. Practice your Day of Atonement daily, often, not just once a year. You will be surprised at what God wants to do with the fertile ground of your heart that is plowed, prepared, planted, and ready for the former and latter rains to fall!

A NEW ECONOMY

After calling His people to true repentance, God makes this promise as He points toward a supernatural economy based upon the double-blessing outpouring: "Then the Lord will be zealous for His land, And pity His people. The Lord will answer and say to His people, 'Behold, I will send you grain and new wine and oil, And you will be satisfied by them; I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations'" (Joel 2:18-19).

After pitying the people (giving mercy and forgiveness

in direct response to true repentance), as the first blessing of the Atonement, God offers a powerful outpouring of the former and latter rain (more about that next).

But what is He blessing doubly? We have the three-fold answer in verse 19:

- Grain (the core ingredient of the bread of life, meaning a fresh revelation of God's Word)
- Wine (a fresh anointing)
- Oil (symbolic of God's power)

In fact, not only will God give these three harvests, but after the double-blessing rains, your life will literally overflow with these blessings: "The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, And the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil" (verse 24).

Full! Overflow! Is that something you want in your life?

I will discuss more about this full, overflowing abundance in the next chapter that focuses on finances. For the remainder of this chapter, however, I want to spotlight on what God is doing on a deeper level to cause this overflow.

You see, the world has consistently scorned the church, but God says the day is coming soon when they will cease to mock. Why? We are getting ready to receive a supernatural overflow of the revelation of God's Word, a fresh anointing, and God's power!

Is it any wonder why God wants our hearts to be carefully and continually prepared. When He pours out the grain, wine, and oil upon our lives in massive supernatural proportions, everything will change.

Joel 2:21-22 tells us, "Fear not, O land; Be glad and rejoice, For the Lord has done marvelous things! Do not be afraid, you beasts of the field; For the open pastures are springing up, And the tree bears its fruit; The fig tree and the vine yield their strength."

Something marvelous is about to happen that has never happened! The world will take notice. A new God-based economy, because of the double-portion season and not dependent upon shaky human precepts, is getting ready to take place.

Are you ready for this?

THE FORMER AND LATTER RAINS

Joel 2:23-24 speaks of something truly remarkable that will happen to those who move into the first blessing of the Atonement: "Be glad then, you children of Zion, And rejoice in the Lord your God; For He has given you the former rain faithfully, And He will cause the rain to come down for you— The former rain, And the latter rain in the first month."

What a prophecy—both rains together!

The Bible tells us that the first thing that will occur in our lives with the understanding of the Atonement is a double portion. But what does that mean?

The former rain deals with the spring rains and the latter rain deals with the fall rains. The first prepares the land for seed time and the latter prepares the land for harvest.

The "normal" economy in Joel's world was for the former rains to fall in the springtime in preparation for the grain harvests, and the latter rains to pour during the autumn in preparation for the harvest of fruit.

What Joel prophesied, however, was the former and latter rain coming down in the first month of the Hebrew year—comparable to October or time of Atonement—and these rains would fall at the same time, a double blessing!

That is the harvest time happening before the seed time. Can you imagine a move of God so glorious that you will reap at the same time as you sow? There will be no time in-between waiting for the harvest to develop. That is exactly what the Lord said is going to happen.

That time is coming for believers who observe and tap into the fertile season that is quickly approaching.

A DIVINE DELUGE OF BLESSINGS

Are you beginning to understand what God is about to do? Everything about this outpouring will be supernatural. In this harvest we will see miracle after miracle.

Thus far we have only seen a mist, a sprinkle, a single rainfall. But the heavens are about to open wide and we will see a divine deluge of God's glory.

He declares, "I will make them and the places all around My hill a blessing; and I will cause showers to come down in their season; there shall be showers of blessing" (Ezekiel 34:26).

What are we commanded to do before the rain begins?

Get ready. Be prepared. Pray that the showers of harvest will begin falling now. God spoke through the prophet Zechariah, saying, "Ask the Lord for rain In the time of the latter rain. The Lord will make flashing clouds; He will give them showers of rain, Grass in the field for everyone" (Zechariah 10:1).

The cloudburst that is about to be released is not determined by our schedule or human whims, but rather by the Father's plan. And I believe God has already appointed the time that is coming. It is the Lord, "They do not say in their heart, 'Let us now fear the Lord our God, Who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season. He reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest" (Jeremiah 5:24).

Again, the greatest barrier why some people won't receive what God is preparing during this divine deluge is revealed in the following verse: "Your iniquities have turned these things away, And your sins have withheld good from you" (25).

If you desire God's harvest on your life, leave evil and wickedness behind. Forget your foolish ways and seek the Lord until you find Him. Cry out to God, "Heal my life. Heal my home."

Let us seek God for this outpouring as never before. According to Scripture, here is what we can expect:

Come, and let us return to the Lord; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us; On the third day He will raise us up, That we may live in His sight. Let us know, Let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, Like the latter and former rain to the earth. (Hosea 6:1-3)

Again and again, God tells us that the first and last rains are coming together! It won't be long.

THE DOUBLE BLESSING ECONOMY

Notice that in God's first month, October, the stock market adjusts. For that matter, world economy adjusts at that time. The first and fourth quarters of the year are, in general, times when the business does better. The second and third quarters of the year are moderate; the first and fourth quarters exceed.

The Word tells us that from March to October, God pours out His blessings moderately. During the latter season, God wants to pour out a double blessing. He is getting ready to do something spectacular.

What does this mean?

It means that you need to get ready to be blessed far beyond anything you can imagine. God will cause affluence to come into your life, as you move into the blessings of the Atonement, in the form of non-wage prosperity. When God promises a double portion, it points to something we obtain through position, not something we work to acquire! It means that you will be overtaken, as God's Word promises, "And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 28:2).

To this point, we have lived too long in the world's economy. We have embraced so little of what God has promised us. We must begin to think the way that God wants us to think and receive His promises in our lives.

It's time to rise up! God's people are a mighty people. We must get the world's economy out of our minds. As a Christian, you can move into the Joel 2 economy. God's blessing is yours by promise.

DOUBLE BLESSING FAITH

God desires to do marvelous things in your life. God's will is that you will never lack in any area of your life, He said, "my people shall never be ashamed." I believe with all of my heart that is exactly what God has promised His own.

It is up to us as His people to prepare our lives, to repent, to increasing our capacity to receive God's abiding and abundant grace. Isaiah speaks of this divine economy:

Enlarge the place of your tent, And let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings; Do not spare; Lengthen your cords, And strengthen your stakes. For you shall expand to the right and to the left, And your descendants will inherit the nations, And make the desolate cities inhabited. Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed; Neither be disgraced, for you will not be put to shame; For you will forget the shame of your youth, And will not remember the reproach of your widowhood anymore. For your Maker is your husband, The Lord of hosts is His name; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth. (Isaiah 54:3-5)

Expanding to the right and the left! Not ashamed! Unafraid! How would your life change if you truly begin to receive the double blessing God is ready to pour out upon you?

It is time to embrace the double blessing promises of God in your life. I love what Hebrews 11:13 says, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were

strangers and pilgrims on the earth."You can actually take the Father's promises and press them close to your heart so that they will never escape you.

You can see every promise God has made within your heart come to pass, for faith always has a destination. Faith is going somewhere and you are going there too when you put your whole heart into believing the precious promises in God's Word.

Deuteronomy 28:13 declares, "And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them."

God's double-portion economy makes you the head, not the tail. It puts you above, not beneath. That is exactly the opposite of what the evil one wants to do in your life: "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

Don't you know that Satan is just grinding his teeth at the thought that God's people will honor His holy Day of Atonement and receive His double-portion blessings? Don't you know that Satan knows the things that will come to us better than we know? Don't you know that he will do all in his power to deceive and discourage us from celebrating God's Atonement Day?

Tell him where to go—back home!

Lift your head and your heart and rejoice at the goodness of God. You are a member of the Royal Priesthood. You are part of the chosen latter rain generation. You know that your economy is dependent upon God, not man—"You are of God, little children, and

have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

Isaiah 60:1 exhorts, "Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you." You are no longer perishing for lack of knowledge. You are coming into a new revelation of God's timeless and imperishable Word.

God wants you to be the head, not the tail. You are to above, not beneath. You are a person of victory, not defeat. You are called to live the double-portion life in God's economy, not man's!

You can arise today and claim your double-portion life. God wants to see you blessed in every area of your life. He intends for you to live abundantly today, anointed and highly favored!

Are you ready?