Preparing for the Coming of the Spirit

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[0:00] If you want to turn your Bibles to Acts chapter 1, where we were, I don't even know, three or four weeks ago.

! It's been a long time it seems, and we'll keep bouncing back as we and I are bouncing back and forth. Between Acts and Esther. So Acts chapter 1 verses 12 through 26 will be the scripture that we'll study tonight.
I'll begin by reading, and it says, Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day journey away. And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the zealot, and Judas the son of James.
All these, with one accord, were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus and his brothers. In those days, Peter stood among the brothers, the company of persons was in all about 120, and said, Brothers, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.
For he was numbered among us, and was allotted his share in this ministry. Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle, and all his bowels gushed out.
[1:45] And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called, in their own language, Ekeldama, that is, field of blood, for it is written in the book of Psalms, May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it, and let another take his place.

So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us, one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.
And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justice, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, You, Lord, you know, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen, to take the place in the ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go his own place.
And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. So if you remember as the book of Acts opens, that Jesus equipped the apostles with the necessary resources to launch the completion of his unfinished work of gathering the elect to his kingdom.
In addition to those resources, he wanted to be sure that the proper men would be involved in carrying out that task. And so a replacement had to be chosen for Judas Iscariot, who, as you all know, betrayed Jesus, and then, as we see, committed suicide soon afterwards.
[3:21] So the first thing we see in verses 12 through 14 is the submission of the disciples. The submission of the disciples.

In his final charge to the disciples before his ascension, Jesus had commanded them to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit, who would come and enable them to carry on the mission that he had given to them.
It was necessary that they wait, because Jesus had made it clear that the Spirit could not be given until he had returned to the Father. And he said that in John chapter 16.
So in obedience to the Lord's command, the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which the Bible says is near Jerusalem. And so the mount called Olivet, Luke includes this because he's adding details.

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If you remember, yes, he's writing eventually to all of us, but Theophilus is the person in particular that this book is being sent to, this letter is being sent to. And so he is giving Theophilus some extra information, so he knows kind of what he's talking about.
[4:28] And the mount called Olivet is the Mount of Olives, which have any of you ever been to Jerusalem before? Nobody here has. We all need to go. We all need to go.

Oh, you have? Yeah, Mount Olivet or the Mount of Olives, I've heard that it's a really neat place. It's more of a hill than a mountain. It's about 400 feet from the Kidron Valley, and it's about 200 feet above Jerusalem.
So where you're standing on Mount Olivet or the Mount of Olives, you can see down into Jerusalem pretty well. And that was a place, as you know, that Jesus liked to go. And ultimately, where he, we believe, he ascended from the other side of that.
And it was more of a private place in Luke 24, 50. And it was probably, again, chosen for its privacy and its nearness to Jerusalem. So it's a neat place.
And then it says that they traveled a Sabbath day journey. That could be kind of confusing. What do they mean by that? Well, it was the maximum distance that was permitted to travel on the Sabbath day, according to rabbinic law.
[5:37] It was fixed at 2,000 cubits, or about a half to three quarters of a mile in distance. And so according to tradition in the Old Testament, when they'd set up the tabernacle, the farthest tents in the camp would be about 2,000 cubits away.

So all that was permitted on the Sabbath day was to be able to basically walk to the tabernacle for worship. And so it's just terminology.
You know, it's not something, obviously, that we follow today. There's no need to, but just to give you some kind of extra information.
If you've ever wondered, what are they talking about? That's what he means. So from there, the 11 remaining disciples, it says, were joined by the women, and that one of those women, of course, was Mary, the mother of Jesus and his brothers.
Well, who were these women? It doesn't say, obviously, but we can probably conclude that Mary Magdalene would have been one of those women. More than likely, Mary, the wife of Clopas, was there.
[6:45] Mary and Martha, if you remember them, could have been among those women, and also Salome. And then it says that Jesus' brothers were there also. These were the natural children of Mary and Joseph.

We call them Jesus' half-brothers. Their names are given in Mark chapter 6. It's James, Joseph, Judas, or Jude, and Simon. And James is pretty familiar.
If you remember, James became the leader of the Jerusalem church, the pastor there, the author also of the epistle that bears his name. He was very important to the church, and also Jude, who wrote the epistle of Jude.
It also bears his name. So Jesus' half-brothers also became important in the work that he called his disciples to do after his ascension. And if you remember also about his half-siblings, that they were highly skeptical of him during his earthly ministry, and they were skeptical of the claims that he made of himself, that he was Messiah.
However, at some point after his resurrection, James was converted when his half-brother appeared to him in 1 Corinthians 15, verse 7.
[7:57] Paul records that, and it could have been very likely then that James was instrumental in witnessing or sharing that news with their other siblings.

And so James was instrumental in bringing Christ's other half-siblings to faith in him. And then it says Mary, the mother of Jesus, was there. And I want to take some time to focus on Mary, because there's a lot of misinformation out there about Mary.
There's a lot of myths. There's a lot of legends and teachings about her that have developed over the years that are not supported by Scripture.
The Bible never says that Mary was anyone but an ordinary human being whom God chose in an extraordinary way. And so if you're familiar, maybe some of you.
My dad grew up Catholic, and so we'd have these conversations, and he'd tell me more about how they would pray to Mary. And I remember as a teenager going on a mission trip to St. Louis with my youth pastor.

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[9:00] And I don't know why he chose to, but just to kind of show us more about the Catholic faith and kind of what they believe. He took us to this cathedral, and it was beautiful and opulent and strange, much different from the church I was used to.

And I remember this little pathway that you could walk to with this altar and this picture of Mary. And, you know, we were all kind of wondering, what is that all about? And he'd tell us, well, they pray to Mary. And we thought that was one of the strangest things that we had ever heard.
And so, yes, Mary was a righteous woman. And, yes, Mary was favored by God. But that doesn't assume that Mary was without sin in any way.
And it doesn't mean that she was not in need of Jesus to be her Savior as well, just like you and I need Jesus to be our Savior, just like everybody does in order to be saved. So you'll hear that some people might argue when it comes to Mary that the Bible says, you know, Gabriel said that she was highly favored.
Well, that phrase comes from a single Greek word, which essentially means that she was given much grace. So Mary received God's grace. And we know that what is grace?
[10:15] Grace is something that you receive that you don't deserve, right? And so Mary, yes, she received grace. But this was something that Mary herself was also aware of, that she was giving something that she wasn't necessarily deserving of, that she wasn't righteous in her own doing.

Because she says in Luke 1, verse 47, that my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior. So she understood that herself. One of the legends about Mary that is believed but isn't supported by Scripture is the Immaculate Conception of Mary.
You ever heard of that before? Not the Immaculate Reception. You've probably heard of that, right? The Steelers and Franco Harris. This is the Immaculate Conception. And so the Immaculate Conception, according to the teaching of the Catholic Church, is the conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
And they say that in this teaching that she was free from original sin by virtue of the foreseen merits of her son, Jesus Christ. The Catholic Church teaches that Mary was conceived by normal biological means in the womb of her mother, who also has been called a saint by the Catholic Church, Saint Anne.
But God acted upon her soul, they say, keeping it immaculate. Sounds strange. The Immaculate Conception is commonly confused with the virgin birth of Jesus.
[11:43] Jesus' birth is covered by the doctrine of incarnation, while the Immaculate Conception deals with the conception of Mary and not of her son. So sometimes we hear that and we think, you know, as Protestants, not being familiar with that teaching, that they must be talking about the birth of Jesus.

And you see there's churches and there's schools named after the Immaculate Conception. But this gives us better insight into what they're actually talking about. Although the belief that Mary was sinless or conceived with an immaculate soul has been widely held since late antiquity, the doctrine was not dogmatically defined until 1854 by Pope Pius IX and his papal bull.
So, again, more information that you know. It's interesting, but I don't know. Come next week, you'll probably forget a lot of it. So just so that you know what they're talking about.
And if you have Catholic relatives or friends and you know that they're talking about Mary in this way, it's good that we understand what Scripture actually says so that we can give them the truth. And so hopefully they'll understand that, you know, Jesus was unlike any other. And Mary, though she was a wonderful woman and she was highly favored by God and she was given an amazing task and responsibility that she was a human being and that she sinned and that she needed Jesus, her son, to be her savior just as much as any of the rest of us do today.
[13:15] And so, again, if you're talking with one of your Catholic friends and they are, you know, arguing with you about that, one of the things you can point them to is Luke chapter 11, verse 27.

And there Jesus was speaking. And if you remember, a woman in the crowd proclaimed to him, blessed is the womb that bore you and the breast at which you nursed.
So here, that would have been a great opportunity for Jesus to say, yeah, you're right. My mom, let me tell you about her immaculate conception or any of that kind of thing. But he didn't do that.
How did Jesus respond? He said, on the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and who observe it. So to Jesus, obedience to God's word was more important than being the woman who gave birth to the Savior.

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And so that's important for us to understand. What does God, what does Jesus say is most important? That we're obedient to him and to his word. Nowhere again in scripture does Jesus or anyone else give direct praise or glory or adoration towards Mary.
[14:26] Yeah, Elizabeth, if you remember, John the Baptist's mother said good things about Mary. He praised her when they came and were visiting one another.

But again, that praise wasn't directed so much to Mary, but to her son who was in her womb and what God was going to do for the world.
And the Bible nowhere indicates that Mary can hear our prayers or that she can meditate, mediate for us with God. And again, we see because that's Jesus's job.
Jesus is our advocate. Jesus is our mediator. And yeah, Mary's in heaven, but she's not doing his job. Okay. So there's a joke about mothers and sons there somewhere, but I didn't, you know, we don't have enough time for that.
The Bible nowhere again indicates that Mary can hear our prayers. While she was a godly woman and she was greatly blessed and that God chose her to bear the Savior of the world, she was in no way divine, nor was she sinless, nor did she or should she be worshipped or prayed to.
[15:34] And the fact is, I don't think Mary, I think Mary, I know Mary would hate to see people treating her in such a way because she would know herself that she's not worthy of being treated in such a way.

And that takes away from who should be receiving the glory and who should be receiving our prayers. And that's Jesus Christ. Mary would be appalled, I think, by what she would see happening primarily in the Catholic Church and what they're saying about her.
Because, again, she sets the example for us when she directs her worship and her adoration and her praise to God alone. When she said, So, while Mary is, I don't want to make it sound like I'm putting Mary down in any way, because could you imagine being young like her?
And we think she was just a teenager and she receives this news from an angel who tells her that she's going to be the mother of the Messiah, the Son of God.
I mean, that's a major responsibility. And she did a great job from all that we can see of raising. I mean, Jesus would have been a perfect kid. So, I mean, I guess any parent would have been blessed to have a kid who's never getting in trouble.
[17:04] Or there was that one time he kind of ran away and stuck around in Jerusalem. But, you know, he was perfect. So, that would have been hard, too, as a parent. You're the one who's always messing up and your kid's always good.

So, anyhow, not to put her down, but just to speak the truth about what the Bible says. Mary was there, and that's great. But, again, we see that she's not given any other responsibility within the church.
And that's what these disciples are about to figure out. They need somebody to fill Judas' spot. And they're starting to put together the structure of the church, so to speak. And Mary isn't mentioned after this.
Not to say that she's not important, but at least those disciples didn't see her as some kind of divine being in any way or immaculate as far as being like Jesus in that way.
And so, that helps us further, you know, know what the truth is and help our brothers and sisters who are of the Catholic faith to see that all that adoration to Mary is unnecessary.
[18:03] In fact, it's wrong and shouldn't be taking place. So, it says then that they were all together, and they were devoting themselves to prayer. And another thing that's interesting to witness or to see is that there was just 120 of them.

And so, now, especially in the church in the United States of America, how do we view success, especially in the church? You know, if you're not, if you don't have over 1,000 people in membership, you're doing something wrong.
But the thing that we see is that God is able to do great things through small beginnings. And this was a very small beginning, 120 people.
And God was about to use this small nucleus of Christians to birth His church. And though they were small in number, they were mighty in power, so much so that from this very modest beginning, this group of people God was going to use to upset the world and to change things.
And now we see that as a result of what they've done, here we are in a continent that they didn't even know about, cross an ocean, and here we are tonight talking about the gospel and sharing this

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good news with one another.
[19:16] And God definitely used this small group in a powerful way. And so, as we look at ourselves, we might, again, I think I mentioned this on Sunday, we tend to, as Christians, look at our faults and our weaknesses and dwell too much on those things.

And we forget that the Holy Spirit has equipped us with strengths and that He would want us to focus on our strengths so that we can best be used by Him to reach our world.
So there we see the submission of the disciples. And then the next one, this might sound kind of grim, but it's the truth, is the suicide of a disciple. Verses 16 through 20.
There was certainly a great joy among these people in this room as they had just witnessed Jesus' ascension. And now they were waiting in anticipation of the Holy Spirit who would soon come, but there was a very difficult matter that needed to be resolved and needed to be dealt with, and that was the issue of replacing Judas Iscariot.
In verse 16, Peter says, Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.
[20:29] And so there it's interesting to point out that Peter says Scripture had to be fulfilled. What's he saying? That God's Word is true. That all these prophecies contained in it will and must come to pass.

And so he's saying that that's exactly what is happening here. And then he also says, Which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David. So there, again, Peter is testifying to the truth that God's Word is inspired by the Holy Spirit.
And that it's truly the Word of God, that men have been moved by the Holy Spirit, but it's God who is speaking through all of this and giving us His Word.
And then he calls Judas a guide to those who arrested Jesus. And so God's Word was being fulfilled. Judas' betrayal was, in fact, crucial to the plan of God, who predicted it all the way back in the Old Testament.
I don't know if you've ever come across any, but there seems to be more of them, and they're Judas sympathizers. Have you ever had a conversation with somebody who goes along the lines of they're trying to say that, you know, somebody had to do it.
[21:44] Somebody had to betray Jesus. And so Judas was just kind of like a pawn in God's game or God's scheme or God's plan, and he couldn't really help it.

That that's just his job. And then they can also kind of make the argument, Or aren't you glad that somebody did it? And so they try to paint this good picture of who Judas actually was.
In fact, I had a conversation with a pastor, and we were talking about this. It was a while ago, but he was basically sympathizing with Judas. And he probably was watching too much History Channel, but for real, there's the gospel of Judas floating around there that people try to give validity to.
And in the world that we live in, as crazy as it sounds, there are people who are sympathizing with Judas, and that's nuts.
That's crazy. Because the Bible clearly indicates that Judas was not saved. That Jesus himself said of Judas, The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him, but woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man.
[22:58] It would be better for him if he had not been born. So if somebody is going to sympathize with Judas, it's probably because they haven't read the Bible very much, and that's just the sad truth. But here again is a clear picture of the sovereignty of God and of the will of men and how they work together.

God had, from ages past, determined that Christ would be betrayed by Judas, that he would die on the cross for our sins, and that he would be resurrected. This is what Jesus meant when he said he would go just as it is written about him, and that nothing would stop the plan of God of providing salvation for mankind.
However, the fact that it was all foreordained does not excuse Judas or absolve him from the punishment he would suffer for his part in betraying Jesus.
Judas had his choice, didn't he? Judas had a choice, and those choices are the source of his punishment. Yet the choices fit perfectly into the sovereign plan of God.
God controls not only the good, but also the evil of man to accomplish his own ends. Here we see Jesus condemning Judas, but considering that Judas traveled with Jesus for nearly three years, we

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know that Judas was also given ample opportunity.
[24:21] He was there. He saw Jesus. He saw Jesus doing miracles. He saw Jesus bringing the dead back to life. He heard Jesus preach.

He saw Jesus do amazing things. And so Judas was that close to the Lord. He traveled with him. He had ample opportunity to believe, but he wouldn't.
He wouldn't believe. And what's scary about this is we see from Judas' example that a person can seem to be walking very closely with the Lord and know nothing about the Lord as their personal Savior.
You know, sometimes we see people and they call themselves Christians, and especially the ones who are on TV and who call themselves pastors, and they seem to be, maybe, if you don't know God's Word much, they seem to be people who know the Lord, but that just shows you how close somebody can be to Jesus Christ without actually being saved by him.
And so Judas is a sobering reminder of that fact. And it's kind of like in giving invitations on Sunday morning, there's a lot of debate about whether you should do that or not. And so some pastors say, well, I know the people in my congregation, and I know that they're saved.
[25:47] Not necessarily. And Judas is an example of that, because I think to the rest of the disciples, even if you remember, at the Last Supper when they were sitting around, and Jesus is talking about one of them going to betray them, and you remember, they weren't all, it's Judas.

They weren't all pointing to Judas. What were they saying? Who is it? And they were talking, who could it be? They had no idea. And so again, it shows you how closely somebody can seem to be to the Lord without actually knowing him as Savior.
Judas' life demonstrates to us how close, again, a person can get to Jesus without ever truly being saved. In a parenthetical statement for Theophilus that was beneficial to him and to us as well, Luke then describes how this man met his demise.
And it says, Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle, and all his bowels gushed out, and it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem, so that in their own language that field has been called Hekeldama, or Hekeldama, that is the field of blood.
So, it's interesting to note that Judas did not purchase the field himself, but because it was purchased with the money that had been paid to him by the Jewish leaders, Luke refers to Judas as the one who was the buyer of the field.
[27:14] The traditional site of the field is south of Jerusalem in the valley of Hinnom, and it's called also the potter's field, because it was, the soil there apparently is great for pottery.

And so, if you hear it called the potter's field, they're not talking about different things. Scripture isn't contradicting itself. It's just known by a couple different names.
Judas felt guilty, and he felt remorseful for what he had done, but not so much so that he was genuinely repentant for what he had done.
He was so overwhelmed by his accusing conscience that he had chose to hung himself. And then in Matthew, he records Judas also hanging himself, but Luke here goes into greater detail about what all was involved in his hanging.
And not to be gory or graphic, but, you know, this is what God's word says. And so, if you're trying to think how he did it, apparently there was probably some kind of a cliff or overhang in this area and a tree of some sort, and he hung himself and either the rope broke or the branch broke and he fell down probably upon some rocks that did quite a number on his body.
[28:27] And so, this was a very gruesome death that Judas experienced. Peter is using the most compelling proof that he has, which is Scripture, to reassure his hearers that Judas' defection, that Judas' death and their choice of his replacement were all part of God's plan foretold in the Old Testament.

He uses a few Scriptures to do that, and I've given those to you. The first is Psalm 55, verses 12 through 15. And that says, For it is not an enemy who taunts me, then I could bear it.
It is not an adversary who deals insolent with me, then I could hide from him. But it is you, a man, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend. We used to take sweet counsel together.
Within God's house we walked in the throng. Let death steal over them. Let them go down to Sheol alive, for evil is their dwelling place and in their heart. And then in Psalm 69, verse 25, the source of the prediction of his removal from office is this verse.

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And it says, May their camp be in desolation. Let no one dwell in their tents. And then in Psalm 109, verse 8, we see the promise for Judas' replacement. And that says, May his days be few, may another take his place.
[29:46] And those are the Scriptures that Peter mentions there. And so thirdly, we see the selection of a disciple. Some have argued that the disciples were wrong to choose a replacement for Judas at this time because they assumed that the 12th man should have been the Apostle Paul and that the disciples jumped the gun by making this choice so soon.

And so they based that claim off of Matthew 19, 28, where if you'll remember, Jesus talks about the 12 thrones that his disciples would rule upon in his future kingdom.
And so they think if any of the disciples earns one of those thrones, one of those places, it should be the Apostle Paul himself. Let me read that Scripture for you.
Jesus said to them, Truly I say to you, in the new world when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel.
And so again, they argue that if there's only 12 thrones, then certainly one of those should go to Paul. And so if ever, I don't know that you will, but if ever you come across somebody who makes that claim, again, it's just important to look at Scripture and what Scripture actually says.
[31:04] And again, that nothing in this passage indicates that the action that these men were taking here in Acts chapter 1 and picking somebody to replace Judas, that there's nothing in their actions that God is trying to put a stop to.

You know, if God didn't want them to find a replacement for Judas, so soon he would have put an end to it. But he didn't. And so we see that it was appropriate, and it was God's will that they find somebody to take this spot.
And again, while Paul was not inferior to the other 11 or 12, when you count Matthias in any way, we understand that he was unique in his mission, that the 12 disciples were primarily sent to the nation of Israel, and Paul was sent to the Gentiles.
And so he had a unique calling that was given to him by the Lord. And so Peter initiates the selection process by listing the requirements of Judas' successor.
First, he must have accompanied the apostles all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them, beginning with the baptism of John until the day that he was taken up.
[32:15] So he had to have witnessed the entire earthly ministry of the Lord. And again, Paul would not have qualified for that. Also, he must be a witness with the other 11 of his resurrection.

He must have seen the resurrected Christ, since the resurrection was a critical theme of their preaching, and all the apostles were eyewitnesses of his resurrection.
And so two men of those 120 met that requirement, and one was Joseph called Barsabbas, and the other was Matthias.
And the thing is, is we don't know anything about these two guys. And then there's the third qualification, which was that whoever it was going to be that was chosen, it had to be the Lord who did the choosing.
And so they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Matthias. And again, the lot is not something we know a whole lot about.
[33:17] Proverbs 16.33 says, The lot is cast into the lap, but every decision from it is from the Lord. And we've got to also understand, why don't we cast lots now, right?

We've got some deacons that we are going to, they're nominated, right? And we're going to have that election on Sunday. So why don't we just, I don't know if it's like Yahtzee, and you throw some dice in the thing, and throw it out there, and see how it lands.
Okay, we've got six. We roll a six. Okay, it's number six. I don't know how it worked out, but why don't we do that anymore? Well, we've got to understand that this was still prior to the Holy Spirit's coming.
And this is also the last instance in Scripture where we see the lot being used to try to determine God's will. And why is that? Well, as Christians, we understand that in believing Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, who do we have living inside of us?
The Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is able to speak to us, right? And then we come together, and the way it's supposed to work, when the body of Christ is healthy and well, when the leadership comes together, and they meet and they talk, they are unanimous in what they're deciding to do.

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[34:28] Why is that? Because the Holy Spirit is alive and working and active in that body, in that group. So now, with Matthias' selection to replace Judas, the final preparation for the church was completed, the final resource had been provided, and all was now ready for the birth of the church on the day of Pentecost, where we will pick up in a few weeks.

Thank you.

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