



The Spirit of Prophecy Series:

Jeremiah

FIRE SHUT UP IN MY BONES
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“He said to them, ‘How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (Luke 24:25-27).

“He said to them, ‘This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.’ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, ‘This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day’” (Luke 24:44-46).

“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days, he has spoken to us in his Son” (Hebrews. 1:1, 2).

“For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts” (2 Peter 1:17-19).

The Spirit of Prophecy

Introduction

Prophecy...

As the word hangs there in the ether, what comes to mind? A hairy man in burlap, pointing his finger and shouting? A one world government? The end of the world? For many of us, the only thing we definitely associate with prophecy is a big question mark. Yet the New Testament contains some clear statements about prophecy. Jesus taught that all scripture, prophecy included, found its fulfillment in Himself (Luke 24:25-27). While every prophecy has an historical fulfillment relating to the circumstances in which it is given, its full meaning is only realized in the person and work of Christ. This holds true even of prophecies whose fulfillment we still await.

The “end times” seem to be a continual sources of curiosity and confusion among Christians. Mountains of books—fiction and non-fiction—have been written on the subject. Movies have been made and remade. Every teacher worth his salt has weighed in. Theologians and fanatics alike

have fastidiously woven scripture and world events into timelines. What has been lost in all of this is Jesus. Many have searched the prophets more diligently for the antichrist than for Christ, though the prophets themselves did not do this (1 Peter 1:10, 11). Wars, rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes, pestilence, and persecution are clues in a cosmic “who-dunnit” instead of being seen for what they are: signs of *His coming* (Matt. 24:3-14). When Christ ceases to be the center and interpretation of the end-times, it is little wonder that there is so much confusion about them among believers.

To put this in theological terms, the chief value of prophecy lies in its Christology, not its eschatology. *The Spirit of Prophecy* is based on Revelation 19:10—“For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” The aim of this series is two fold: 1) to discover the testimony of Jesus in the words of the prophets; 2) by discovering the testimony of Jesus, to rescue the prophetic books from the carnal and even fantastical interpretations which they have sometimes been subjected. Restoring the testimony of Jesus to the prophets also allows prophetic voices to fulfill their

original ministry. God spoke through prophets to deal with the hearts of His people, to heal their unfaithfulness, to draw them back to Himself so that they might worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). This ministry is largely lost when prophecy is treated as a way to decode current events. Only by lifting up Jesus will men be drawn to God (John 12:32, 33).

This is not to say that the interpretations offered here are the only ones possible. Hopefully, the ways of seeing Jesus in the prophets are as endless as God Himself. But if this series can cause the reader to think differently about the prophets, to search them for Jesus instead of end-times timelines, then it will have accomplished its purpose.

Imagined Image

Jeremiah 1

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5).

We all have a certain self-image, an idea of who we are, who we think we could be. This self-image must be given up because it is a fabrication of our own imagination. God told Jeremiah He knew him before He formed him, and He set him apart. This resonates with Ephesians 1:4, 5—“For He chose us in Christ before the creation of the world to be set apart and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ.” Any self-image we establish is necessarily established in contradiction of the truth in Christ. It is an image of self in the worst sense, an image as prohibited by the second commandment: “You shall not make any graven image,” for Christ is “the image of the invisible God” (Ex. 20:4; Col. 1:15).

God also put his words in Jeremiah’s mouth and appointed him a prophet over nations and

kingdoms. Again, we have a divine definition set forth. Very often, the self-image we establish is defined by vocation. But in the Lord, vocation is intimately linked with, is secondary to, and flows from who Christ is. “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph. 2:10). Our vocation, what we do, does not define who we are. Rather, God has set forth an eternal purpose in Christ which defines/determines what we do. To say it another way, those created in Christ become the body through which Christ performs His vocation. And this includes, as in Jeremiah’s case, the declaring of God’s word, and the subjugation of every nation to that word through discipleship (Matt. 28:18-20).

We are what Christ is: known and chosen by God, set apart as his own flesh and blood, shining like stars and reigning over darkness as we bear the word of life in ourselves (Phil. 2:15, 16). Any idea of ourselves outside of this is an image defiantly supplanting Christ in us. This is why the Lord tells Jeremiah, “I will pronounce my judgments on my people because of their wickedness in forsaking me, in burning incense to

other gods and in worshiping what their hands have made” (Jer. 1:15, 16). This is why the word came through Jeremiah “to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant” (Jer. 1:10). The word must come to destroy us. For to be what Christ is is to be crucified. It is to see self—the image that is the work of our hands—dead on the cross with Jesus and buried with Jesus forever (Rom. 6:4). To be what Christ is is also to be raised out of death. It is to see Jesus—the image of the invisible God, the exact representation of His being—alive in our place, and for God’s testimony within to be “I AM, and there is no other” (Isaiah 45:5). For “God’s testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which He has given about His Son. Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart” (1 Jn. 5:9, 10).

The Purpose of Our Deliverance

Jeremiah 2

The Lord describes the desert as “a land not sown...a land of drought and darkness and the shadow of death” (Jer. 2:2, 6). There is no life in the desert because no seed has fallen into the

ground and died (John 12:24). For a time, the Israelites were glad to be free from slavery and to follow God through these lifeless circumstances. But ultimately, Israel misunderstood the true nature of their deliverance; their minds were set on the flesh, and they assumed God had released them from Egypt for their happiness and benefit. Israel wanted something for herself but God wanted Israel for Himself. They placed their interests at the center of God's will rather than making God the center of their will.

In fact, the purpose of the desert was to sow Israel in death. The desert journey ends at the Jordan, which means *descend*. This is baptism into death, through which we leave a land not sown and rise into "a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees" (Rom. 6:3; Deut. 8:8). It is here that God's complaint centers. He says of Israel, "They did not ask, 'Where is the LORD...?'" (Jer. 2:6, 8). They did not seek Him as Mary did. Her yearning for Jesus brought her even into His grave, and, not yet recognizing Him, she said to Him, "Tell me where you have put Him" (John 20:15).

We must seek Jesus in the tomb. This is confusing when our minds are set on selfish

desires. We often gladly follow Christ out of slavery. We rejoice in His teaching, we crowd around when He is giving bread from heaven or a healing touch. But when He is stripped of all beauty, when our only prize is the bare grain being sown in dishonor and weakness, we are offended and no longer ask, “Where is the Lord?” Instead, we worship an imagined Jesus, one that appeals to us, and we become worthless (Jer. 2:5). For God can do nothing through a church who will not join Him in His death. “Unless a seed falls into the ground and dies, it remains by itself, alone. But if it dies, it brings forth much fruit” (John 12:24). Yet very often, the church is like a woman who loves the wooing, the romance, and the pleasure of intercourse with her husband, but who refuses the suffering through which new life comes forth. She would rather abort than abide.

Yet, we must not refuse the seed in us or limit it to fetal growth and still birth. Not that we must be martyrs in the physical sense. But we must be martyrs in the literal sense: we must be witnesses, we must go down into death with Him, we must live with Him, we must see Christ as He is and not as we would make Him. This is the purpose of our

deliverance—to have our experience infused with the suffering, dying, and rising One.

Forgetting the Ark Jeremiah 3

“In those days...men will no longer say, ‘The ark of the covenant of the LORD.’ It will never enter their minds or be remembered...At that time they will call Jerusalem the Throne of the LORD, and all nations will gather in Jerusalem to honor the name of the LORD. No longer will they follow the stubbornness of their evil hearts” (Jer. 3:16, 17).

Many things are associated with the throne throughout scripture. Kings of Israel were required to keep a copy of the law, so God’s law is tied to the throne (Deut. 17:18). In Solomon, we see that the throne was a source of wisdom, judgment, and justice (1 Kings 3:24-28). Righteousness, love, and faithfulness are also attributed to the throne (Psalm 89:14). To give one last example, the throne is also called God’s dwelling place (Psalm 132:13). Taken in sum, we can say that the throne is the seat or dwelling place

of all that the king is and is invested with all his power and person. The throne is one with, and is an extension of, the king.

Under the old covenant the ark was the throne of God (1 Sam. 4:4). In the verse quoted above, Jeremiah prophesies a change of covenant. Under this covenant, the ark is forgotten, and the Lord becomes enthroned in His people. Rather than pronouncing commandments from the throne as with Moses, the Lord promises that His people will be an extension of Himself, invested with all His power and person (Exodus 25:22). The law, wisdom, judgment, righteousness, love, and faithfulness of God will dwell in His people, and “No longer will they follow the stubbornness of their evil hearts.” This throne is a union in which God’s will is done in earth as in heaven, and was established in Christ who said, “Not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42).

The Need for Ante-creation

Jeremiah 4 & 5

“I looked at the earth, and it was formless and empty; and at the heavens, and their light was

gone...I looked, and there were no people; every bird in the sky had flown away. I looked, and the fruitful land was a desert; all its towns lay in ruins before the LORD, before his fierce anger” (Jer. 4:23-28).

This verse foreshadows the utter devastation worked by God at the cross. Notice that Jeremiah’s wording is the same as Genesis 1:2—“Now the earth was formless and empty....” So complete was God’s destructive power against sin that the entire universe was brought to a state of ante-creation in Christ. We have a need for the devastation of the cross to come into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. All definition and fullness, all light and understanding, all life and humanity that is merely natural must be undone, and we must come to an utter end. Then, into the darkness, nothingness, and lifelessness, the Lord’s word can come with a definition, fullness, light, and life that is not us but is God Himself.

We do not have need of a cleaned up, improved first creation; we have need of what is not this creation at all. We do not have need of a Christianity which ministers to us as old creation people, propping us up with scriptural insights and

prayers, keeping us alive with continued healing and feeding. We do not need the resurrection of Lazarus, but of Christ. We do not need a restored old man, we need an entirely new man.

Christianity should be a living out from this new man. This man doesn't need to get to heaven; He is from heaven (1 Cor. 15:47). This man is not besieged by sin; He has died to it and lives to God (Rom. 6:10). This man is not needing to be filled because all fullness dwells in Him (Col. 2:9, 10). This man does not need healing for His wounds heal (1 Peter 2:4). This man doesn't live in fear of the devil for "He has no hold" in Him (John 14:30).

Old creation men will do anything to preserve their lives. They will embrace holiness and put all their force of will into it, but they will never say, "Not my will" (Luke 22:42). They will seek God's anointing, but not the anointing for burial (Matt. 26:6-13). They will swear, "As surely as the Lord lives," but refuse the discipline and crushing of the Lord (Jer. 5:2, 3). They will allow Christ to minister through them as long as they never need say, "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). Yet this is what we must come to. We must come to a place of ante-creation for, "If anyone is

in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Cor. 5:17).

Uncircumcised Ears

Jeremiah 6

Throughout Jeremiah chapter 6 we find the Lord confronting Israel with their refusal to listen to Him. In verse 6:10, the Lord says of His people, “Their ears are uncircumcised so they cannot hear. The word of the LORD is offensive to them.” Our hearing needs to be free of fleshly mindedness or the Lord’s word will be distorted by our personal desires (2 Tim. 4:3, 4). We must ask the Holy Spirit to attune our ears to the message of the cross, for only in this word is flesh cut away from spirit. We are warned many times in the New Testament that there are, within the church, many other messages and many other Jesuses being preached (1 Cor. 15:2; 2 Cor. 11:4; Gal. 1:6-9). But these do not penetrate to the dividing of soul from spirit (Heb. 4:12). These leave the flesh alive—to sin, to prosper, to strive for personal righteousness, or to pursue self-actualization through the gifts and callings of God. No, if the

ringing mandate of our heart is not, “Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me,” our ears are uncircumcised, and we have received another gospel (Luke 9:23).

Bones and Branches

Jeremiah 7 & 8

***“If you really change your ways and your actions...then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your forefathers for ever and ever”
(Jer. 7:5-7).***

In these verses, the Lord is telling us how to remain in Him. The True Vine says to His branches, “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love...My command is this: love each other as I have loved you” (John 15:10, 12). The Lord’s word is the nourishing sap, the life, of the Vine. By it the branches remain and take on the characteristics of the Vine. We cannot hope to remain in Him while refusing it.

Israel was in the land of promise, but the promise was not in them. “He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through

them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires” (2 Peter 1:4). Because they refused the divine nature revealed in the commandments, they fell into theft, adultery, and other evil desires (Jer. 7:9). Instead, they trusted in the temple, in “having a form of godliness but denying its power” (Jer. 7:4, 14; 2 Tim. 3:5). The disconnect between Israel and God ran so deep that the Lord told Jeremiah not to pray for them. “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you will, and it will be given you” (Jer. 7:16; John 15:7).

It was not as though Israel didn’t have what she needed to obey the Lord, as if He was expecting her to perform without providing the necessary resources. Israel was in the land just as “of God are you in Christ Jesus who has become for us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30). Could we remain in Christ while refusing wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, and all else He is to us? Neither could Israel maintain her deliverance from Egypt while ignoring His word: “For when I brought your forefathers out of Egypt and spoke to

them...I gave them this command: obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people” (Jer. 7:22, 23).

God is not a hard man, reaping where He has not sown. He only comes for what is His—the fruit any vinedresser could expect from a vine he has planted, tended, and watered. Those branches which do not permit the life of the Vine to flourish, to burst out as fruit, are like bodies divorced from blood: “The bones of the people of Jerusalem will be removed from their graves. They will be exposed to the sun...they will not be gathered up or buried, but will be like refuse lying on the ground” (Jer. 8:1, 2). “If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers” (John 15:6).

The Sound of Wailing

Jeremiah 9

“The sound of wailing is heard from Zion: How ruined we are! How great is our shame!” (Jer. 9:19)

Throughout scripture, wailing is common when the Lord comes in judgment and leaves no hope of

escape or recovery. There was wailing when all the first-born were slain in Egypt, and in John's vision of the fall of Babylon (Ex. 12:30; Rev. 18:19).

Wailing is the blindness of the unspiritual mind expressed—full of protest, agony, and searching. For when our treasure is stored up on earth, and our heart is there also, we cannot see past suffering or loss (Matt. 6:19-21). It is incomprehensible. For sinners and Christians whose minds are set on the flesh, death is the final truth.

When Jesus came to visit a man whose daughter had just died, he asked, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep" (Mark 5:39). Jesus knew that He, and not death, was the final truth. Nevertheless, scripture says the people laughed at Him. Those grieving blindly always have a moment to pause and call Jesus a fool. But Jesus put out the mourners and wailers (Mark 5:40). Only three disciples and the girl's parents—those who believed—saw resurrection in the midst of tragedy. "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them...There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev. 21:3, 4). Through the

resurrection of Christ, God made man His dwelling; what was mortal has been swallowed up by life (2 Cor. 5:4). Those who believe, whom He draws to be eye-witnesses of Himself, see beyond death. In Jesus they find One who is worth the loss of all things (Phil. 3:7, 8).

Changed into the Same Image Jeremiah 10

Throughout Jeremiah 10, God mocks the fashioning of idols and images. Is He opposed to depictions of Himself? This cannot be because He Himself has an image: “[Christ] is the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15). Yet the Lord’s choice of images is revealing because it is nothing other than a man—that which He chose to bear His image from the beginning (Gen. 1:27). The message in this seems clear: the Lord does not want us to make images, but to be images. He does not want us worshiping what our hands have made but being made without hands by the One we worship (Col. 2:11). He does not want us inventing forms for the Invisible, but being formed by the Invisible (Col. 3:10).

Images—whether actual statues or mental contrivances—divorce us from God. This is Jeremiah’s complaint—“[I]mages are a fraud; they have no spirit in them” (Jer. 10:14). In them we do not see God’s Spirit dwelling in a Man and by that Man in us (Eph.2:21, 22). In them we see and worship and become separation: “They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see; they have ears, but cannot hear, nor is there breath in their mouths. Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them” (Psalm 135:16-18). But when we look steadily on Christ, the image of God, we are “changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18).

Inflation Jeremiah 12

“Why do all the faithless live at ease?...You are always on their lips but far from their hearts. Yet you know me, O LORD; you see me and test my thoughts about you” (Jeremiah 12:1-3).

The faithless live at ease. The word of God does not judge the thoughts and attitudes of their hearts (Heb. 4:12). The Father of Spirits does not arrange circumstances in order to test and discipline them (Heb. 12:9). It is not as though they are irreligious. Jeremiah says they speak often of the Lord. Yet, their basic desire is not as David's: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23, 24).

To be sure, the lives of the faithless have an appearance of freedom: they can pursue any job, dream, spouse, or ministry they want without their motives being sifted or challenged. This can seem unfair to those seeking to be known by God. Like Jeremiah, they may question His justice, especially when intimacy with Christ comes at the loss of personal fulfillment or benefit (Jer. 12:1; Phil. 3:7, 8).

God responds to Jeremiah with a question of His own: "If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses?...Your brothers, your own family—even they have betrayed you" (Jer. 12:5, 6). In other

words, knowing God will get even more costly. “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he is not able to be my disciple” (Luke 14:26). Faithful ones, do not covet what moth and rust destroy, what thieves steal (Matt. 6:19). Rather, “let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross...so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (Heb. 12:1-3).

The Name That Is Above Every Name

Jeremiah 14

***“For the sake of your name do not despise us”
(Jeremiah 14:21).***

Glancing through the scriptures, it becomes clear that Jeremiah is not merely appealing to the Lord’s reputation in this verse: “...our redeemer from of old is your name” (Isaiah 63:16; 1 Peter 1:18, 19); “Help us, O God our savior, for the glory of your name; deliver us and forgive our sins

for your name's sake" (Psalm 79:9; Eph. 2:5); "...through your name we trample our foes" (Psalm 44:5; Col. 2:15); "Remember how the enemy has mocked you, O LORD, how foolish people have reviled your name" (Psalm 24:18; Matt. 27:39-44). Speaking of Himself just before the cross, Jesus said, "Father, glorify your name!" (John 12:28). In doing so, He showed that He was the name of the Lord and drew into Himself all scriptural testimony concerning God's name. For "there is no other name given to men under heaven by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Scripture also says that God's people are called by His name (2 Chron. 7:14). We are no longer known by our old name, Adam, nor by his despicable conduct. God only knows us by the name which suffered, died, and was buried, the name which rose again on the third day. He makes no distinctions in his heart between us and Christ. Therefore, He will not despise us. Instead, in Christ, God says of us, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17).

Fire Shut up in My Bones

Jeremiah 20

“So the word of the LORD has brought me insult and reproach all day long. But if I say, ‘I will not mention him or speak any more in his name,’ his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.” (Jer. 20:8, 9).

Jeremiah could not hold in the Lord’s word. There was a life in him, a life that made the universe from nothing, that cleaved a path through the sea, that slew a giant with a stone (Heb. 11:3; Exodus 14:21; 1 Sam. 17:49). It made the sun stand still, the shadow go back, the walls of a city crumble (Joshua 6:20; 10:13; 2 Kings 20:9, 10). It killed an army with a bone and soothed Satan with a song (Judges 15:15; 1 Sam. 16:23). The grave could not hold it. Shaking the earth and tossing a massive stone, it burst from its tomb with the declaration, “He is not here, but is risen” (Luke 24:6). It broke the apostles out of jail and defied the priests of death with a mandate: “Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words

of this life” (Acts 5:19, 20). “This life” isn’t fettered by doubts, intimidated by men, or subject to limitation from any source (Jer. 1:7, 8). It is the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last (Rev. 1:11). It is before all things, and in it all things hold together (Col. 1:17). In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, it can blaze from our very marrow, consuming to the right and to the left, making the dead live (2 Kings 13:21). “Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them.... They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you” (Jer. 1:17-19). Nothing—in heaven or in earth—can stop the life!

Plans Jeremiah 29

“‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’” (Jeremiah 29:11).

When Jeremiah received this word, Judah’s circumstances were completely contrary to God’s

promise. Jerusalem was earmarked for destruction because of her sins. Most of Judah's best and brightest had been taken captive to Babylon; only the poorest people remained (2 Kings 24:14; Jer. 29:1). Yet the Lord promised prosperity and not harm.

In Romans, Paul discusses the sufferings of this present time, how creation groans under its bondage to corruption (Rom. 8:21). The state of Judah in Jeremiah's time was not so different from the state of the creation in which we live. But then Paul says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). Notice that all things do not work together for our benefit, but for good. There is a good higher than personal benefit. Romans 8:29 defines that good: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son...." By bringing catastrophes, God was not annihilating Jerusalem. He was saving her. God used Babylon to destroy Jerusalem's sin while preserving her. When captivity ended, only those most faithful to the Lord cared to return to rebuild the city and the temple.

We can see the cross of Christ in this: Jerusalem was sown in dishonor but raised in glory just as Christ was (1 Cor. 15:43). For those in Christ, who participate in His death and resurrection, the sufferings of this present time accomplish God's purpose: all things work together to purge us of fleshliness so that we will be conformed to the image of His Son. Consequently, "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). God indeed knows the plans He has for us, the hope and the future He has prepared in Christ.

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world'" (Matt. 25:34).

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...to know and preach nothing but Christ

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