

# Why Stand Ye Gazing Acts

by George Verwer

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*George Verwer emphasizes the importance of active witnessing and the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers as illustrated in the Book of Acts.*

**Duration:** 44:49

**Scripture:** Acts 1:8-10, Acts 2:46-47, Acts 3:6, Acts 4:31-32

**Topics:** "Jesus Christ"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the book of Acts, which he describes as a transition book in a great transition period in history. He highlights the ascension of Jesus into heaven and his promise to send the Holy Spirit to empower his disciples. The preacher emphasizes the importance of being witnesses for Jesus in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. He also discusses the significance of unity, love, and praise in the church, and addresses the controversial teachings of prosperity and signs and wonders. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the exclusivity of salvation through Jesus Christ and the importance of evangelism.

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## Transcript

The Book of Acts. I'd like to speak to you this evening about some of the biblical principles that we find in the New Testament Church. The Book of Acts is not a theological book.

People who try to draw up systematic theology from the Book of Acts either end up in a false cult, a tangent, or a headache. Because it is not a book of systematic theology. It's a transition book of a great transition period in history.

In the first chapter we find the Lord Jesus Christ going into the heavens and telling his disciples that they're going to receive power after the Holy Ghost has come upon them. Verse 8. Verse 8, chapter 1. And he says, I like those words. Or should I say, I don't like them.

Why stand ye gazing? Many a Christian, after coming to know the Lord Jesus Christ, spends many years gazing. Many years thinking about salvation, gazing at the Lord, and not getting involved in obeying what the Lord has told him to do. There's an old hymn where sometimes we sing, it's called, Trust and Obey, Trust and Obey.

And I believe it's true. I also trust that every one of you will realize that world evangelism and taking the gospel to every creature was one of the most important and basic things on the heart of Jesus Christ. This proves it.

Together with many other verses. But the very fact that just before Jesus left, he gave this final instruction. Now he didn't say that much when he came back from the dead, resurrected.

And this is one of the few things recorded here in the book of Acts. And so I believe it's obviously extremely important. Ye are my witnesses.

A great mistake in so many places is that people think being witnesses of Jesus Christ is for a selected few. The book of Acts teaches, and this is the first principle, that we are all to be his witnesses. We don't all witness the same way, but we are all to be his witnesses.

Now there's something you must understand about O.M. that's very important. And that is that we are basically a church-oriented and to some degree assembly and church-centered movement. If you are the rebellious type that feels all the churches are completely up the pole and you can't possibly work with the churches, basically you're in the wrong place.

And I believe there's many scriptures to prove that you're in the wrong place. And I believe that the easy way, of course, is to forget about the established church. And you remember, as you and your generation forget about the established church, so your children will forget about you.

It's easy to be a rebel until you become 40 and 50 and then discover that someone's rebelling against you. The Word of God says, very clearly, in the book of Matthew, chapter 7, these powerful words, Now I was a rebel and I was tempted to really throw off the church and everything that was linked with it. But from His Word and by His mercy, I came to see that God's plan for evangelism, though He is sovereign and uses many methods, and He does use non-church groups without any question, He desires and has established a church.

And that includes a local church. Firstly, we're all members of the body of Christ. That's the true church.

Remember that. That's foundational. No matter what movement we may be in, we're all members of the body of Christ.

But also we see, in the book of Acts, we'll see it a little further as we move on, that God called the believers together or allowed them to come together and brought Paul as teaching of the local church. I'm not talking about church buildings. That was man's idea.

I'm not saying we shouldn't cooperate with a church that has a church building. I believe we should, if it's a live church. But the church is in the book of Acts.

We're meeting in homes. And I think there's some danger that we think, therefore, that, of course, the true church must be in home. I think there's always that danger of getting caught up with outward things.

Really, to me, whether you meet in a cave, a cathedral, a home, or a tent, that isn't the main thing. You're entitled to your view. Fine.

But how can you believe that's the main doctrine? We are for tent meetings. We are for meetings in caves. We only meet in factories.

We are of the cathedral plan. No. The main thing is always what's in your heart.

These other things are important, more important in some situations than others. But reality is in the heart. And I believe that this is what we see in the book of Acts.

We don't see one specific way. We don't see one systematic little set playing in the book of Acts. You can't find it.

I've read this book I don't know how many times through. One time I read the whole book through in one night before I went to bed. But you will find a heartbeat.

You will find men aflame for God. You will find love. You will find reality.

You will not find such a clear-cut pattern as some would like to believe. And that's why we have at least 100 patterns out of the book of Acts by all different groups. But you'll find a heartbeat.

And this is what I hope you'll see as well as some principles, of course. Hear my witnesses. Don't stand gazing.

Do what you're told. They were told to go to Jerusalem. They were told to wait for this power.

Now we know in Acts chapter 2 it came. It came in a very unusual way. And I don't know of hardly any other time in history when it came, he came, because the Holy Spirit is a person, when he came in this way.

Some of you may not agree, but it seems to me that the first coming of the Holy Spirit was a historical event, and that since that first coming, basically, the Holy Spirit has come into all those who were baptized into the body of Christ. They may not be filled with the Spirit. They certainly will need the anointing of the Spirit.

But it is our belief, as we see it in the book of Acts, and in Corinthians, and in the Gospels, that the Holy Spirit indwells all believers. Romans says, If you have not the Spirit of Christ, ye have not Christ. Who is the Spirit of Christ? It's the Holy Spirit, not two spirits.

It's not the Spirit of Christ, then the Holy Spirit. So the Holy Spirit indwells the believer. As you know, there at this point are two major divisions in people's thinking.

And unless the Holy Spirit keeps his hands on O.M., we will see these two major emphases, and all their side emphases, blow this movement right apart, cut our evangelistic thrust, and slice our source of power from on high. There's one school that believes that after you're born again, some believe that you already have the Holy Spirit when you're born again. Others seem to be mixed up on that.

But in any case, they believe that you must have a second work of grace, which they call the baptism of the Holy Spirit. You can read innumerable books on the subject, and you can find many great men of God who will give testimony to having experienced what they call a baptism of the Holy Spirit. Then you'll have a large school who do not believe in a second work of grace.

They believe more in growth and continual work of grace. And down through the years, even in the past years, there has been adamant controversy between these two groups. There have been hundreds of churches that have split right down the middle between these two differences of opinion.

Both sides have their Bible verses. Both sides have at least a hundred books apiece that they've produced and written over the years. Both sides have their theologians.

And both sides are still waging war tonight. And we have both sides in Operation Mobilization. How we do it? Some people don't know, but I do.

The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit not allowing us to get divided on areas that are still so controversial and so unsettled in the whole evangelical world. Nobody stops you from reading books on both sides.

We have both sides in our bookshop. But we feel for the evangelistic thrust that God has called us into in this work, we must try to avoid controversy on this subject. And we would like to be able to say, as Billy Graham once said, I don't care how you get it, just get it.

We all can believe and unite together that we should be filled with the Spirit. So really when it comes down to it, the only difference is how you go about it. And to the man who likes to speak a lot and likes to engage in controversy, we would only say that as a young person in a training movement, we would prefer to see it in your life before we see it lapping off your lip.

If you have been baptized in the Holy Spirit, you believe that's God's way of sanctification, let's see the reality. Let's see the souls. Let's see the fruit of the Spirit.

Let's see this New Testament Christianity in you. Don't write me a book or start a gospel periodical about this or that, but let it radiate through your life. Some of my very close friends have had such an experience.

I would never despise any experience that a man feels is a sacred experience from God. However, I would never judge another man because he has not had the exact same experience. You study history, you'll see some great men had completely different ideas on this subject.

Some of you know the tremendous division that there was between Whitefield and Wesley, the controversy that raged, the letters that were exchanged between those two men. And I think it is a miracle of God that He has raised up a movement in the 20th century that can take Whitefields and Wesleys and anybody else as long as they're willing to hold to the basic tenets of the evangelical faith. And I don't believe most evangelical theologians would say that this is a basic tenet because there have been so many Spirit-filled, loving, powerful, soul-winning, mighty evangelists on both sides of the fence.

What bothers me the most is people of 19 years of age who are absolutely convinced beyond a shadow of doubt they know the truth, when the most brilliant theologians at 60 are still fighting and trying to decide exactly what the situation is. They say more people know more theology when they come out of Bible school than after 40 years of penetrating the Word of God. You figure that one out.

After a few years of diddling around in the Bible, we really think we know so much. The fact is we have so much more to learn. I can't go any further at this point, but I think that basically we've got enough to agree on, enough to stay united under, enough to fight for, for His glory.

The Holy Spirit came in Acts chapter 2 and we see the reality throughout the rest of the book of Acts. One thing's interesting is that they needed to be filled again in 4 verse 31. 4 verse 31.

And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together. They were all filled with the Holy Ghost and they spake the Word of God with boldness. And so, even if you believe that

there is one special crisis, I don't think you can deny the fact that there are many needed fillings.

Personally, I believe we need to be filled with the Spirit every day. We find many basic principles in the last part of chapter 2. Notice verse 42. They continue steadfastly in the Apostles' Doctrine.

Fellowship, breaking of bread, prayer. Obok Singh says they're the four pillars of the New Testament church. Apostles' Doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayer.

Do you have them in your life? That's book of Acts, Christianity. And fear came upon every soul and many wonders and signs were done by the Apostles. Now, I'm not against God bringing forth signs and wonders, but I think if you study the book of Acts you will see that most of the time, in fact, as far as I can see, almost all the time, the signs and wonders were done at the hands of the Apostles, not the new converts.

There are anointed men in our day who have special gifts and who have been mightily used. I have seen Bok Singh, a man who is very, very against extremes, a man who basically in theology is closer to Whitfield's side by far than Wesley, who doesn't believe in a second blessing, and yet a man who quietly goes off after his meetings, lays hands on the sick and has seen many, many healed. You never even know what's going on, very quietly, in its right proportion.

But Bok Singh is a 20th century Apostle, not a novice. Some of you will have difficulty in O.N. because you are more denominational, you are more in a particular line of thinking. That's all right, don't be ashamed of it.

Keep studying. You may be wrong on a few points. But remember you're only coming on O.N. for a year and also you're very young.

And so even if you feel rather strongly in a particular aim, a particular line of doctrine, it will not harm you for a year to lay the more controversial things aside and get down to some basic training in other areas where I'm sure the Lord wants to teach you. We have young people go off O.N., back to their denominations and do a great work within their own denomination. And they're thankful for the time they were in O.N. that balanced them, that built them up and that taught them many other things.

That they are incorporating into their own movements to the benefit of their own work. I want to tell you it is a miracle the linking we have with the churches around the world. We were told in Indonesia no other group ever had as much cooperation with the evangelical churches as we did.

Almost 98 percent. No wonder we sold 19,000 books in 12 days. And those books are going to teach more sound doctrine and revolutionary truth in those churches than you and I could ever imagine.

A lot of us are going to the Festival of Light on Saturday but I just found out I'm booked to speak at a large group that won't be participating in the Festival of Light. It's the London Fellowship of all the young people in the strict Baptist denomination. How we've got into that young meeting, that meeting, I'm not sure.

But this is the way God has worked. Two weeks ago I was speaking at the biggest holiness revival convention in the country. In Southport.

They've already written me back and asked me to go back next year as the main speaker for two meetings instead of one. How that worked out, I don't understand either. I have preached in more places with

greater reception among people whose theology I don't agree with than I've received blessing preaching among those whose theology I do agree with.

I know one thing. I've got a lot to learn. I know another thing.

I want this kind of reality I see in this book. And I want to be flexible enough for the Holy Spirit to give me anything He wants to give. Some people say, Oh, this OM, they're not open to the gifts of the Spirit.

We're open to the gifts of the Spirit. But we're not open to confusion, chaos, backbiting, circus music, nonsense, and all kinds of other things that sometimes come in under the guise of gifts of the Spirit. And we don't believe the gifts of the Spirit are one or two, but we believe they're all that's in the Word of God.

We don't believe there's only one definition. There's quite a wide viewpoint on the gifts and how they operate. You realize, just among the groups that emphasize more the gifts of the Spirit, there is an innumerable amount of divisions.

In the one city I was preaching in, in Indonesia, there are more than 15 major Pentecostal groups alone. This is Indonesia, not Chicago. In Chicago we have at least a hundred.

And they're divided in one point after another. So when you say, believe this or don't believe that, you've got to do some defining. And you better study and make sure you know what you're talking about.

Because these things are a lot more complex than most young people think. But I'll tell you, in this movement, as far as I know, we are open to anything God wants to give. But we believe that He has raised up this movement and that He may allow certain things to be kept away that we may remain one and united and fulfill the God-given testimony that God has given to us.

And that is as important, in the view of the whole of the Scripture, it's more important than some of these other things. You must understand that. And you must not come with OM if you cannot stand as a loyal soldier together with us at the foot of the cross.

If you feel that you must emphasize your particular truth, your way of doing things, that basically OM is a compromising group or it's not preaching the whole Bible, then why come? Join one of the red-hot evangelistic movements that has these beliefs that you feel are so important. And if some people had as much reality as they had noise, Afghanistan would have been reached years ago. And Turkey as well.

And you know, we want to be the first to confess we're a feeble band. And we want to get out of the way for anybody else who's red-hot for Christ, winning souls, shaking down Muslim strongholds. We just want to get out of the way whoever they are, whatever their experience, Wesley, Whitfield, Booth, Jeffries, anybody.

We'll get out of the way. Let them come. Swedes, Danes, Italians, Indians, Pentecostals, Baptists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, whatever else they may be.

Let them come. Hallelujah. Shake Afghanistan for Christ.

Isn't it funny that the Lord has chosen such an ungifted band as us to reach so many millions with the word and see so many thousands brought into a saving faith with Jesus Christ. And to see churches planted in at least 10 different countries. And to see disciples on almost every continent in the world today.

That's sovereign grace. And you'll find it in every page of the book of Acts. And it goes on to say and they sold their possessions.

Ooh. How did that get in there? And goods imparted them to all men as every man had need. Now, it's amazing.

In the United States, we have several groups that literally go into the air on verse 43. They think signs and wonders are everything. Without that, you've got nothing.

The very same group thinking of one particular group teaches that all those who love the Lord will be wealthy. They teach the P of prosperity. And that anyone who loves the Lord is going to be blessed, is going to be wealthy.

And if you're a great preacher, you'll definitely have to have a new car and a big home and a big salary. That's spirituality. So they take verse 43, but when they get to verse 45, they sort of hiccup and go on to the next verse.

I find very few people who want the whole counsel of God. The blessing as well as the responsibility. It's like so many people who want to be able to have verse 6 in chapter 3, where Peter said that to this man who was lame, rise up and walk.

I meet many who want to be able to say to the lame, rise up and walk. Have you ever met them? This is what we need. We need power.

We need this New Testament reality. But I have hardly met a person in 16 years of walking with Jesus who were able to say as Peter, silver and gold have I none. It's in the same verse.

It's in the same verse. One is a blessing. The other is a to most people the way they think a major trial and so they just wouldn't even think of it.

Silver and gold have I none. But what I have I give. Rise up and walk.

This is what we see in verse 45. They sold their possessions and their goods. They parted them to all men as every man had need.

It wasn't a rule. It was a revolution. You write that in your notebook.

I don't think I've said that before. It wasn't a rule. It was a revolution.

And I believe that you and I need to see that there's no rule in O.M. that you have to sell your possessions or drain your bank account or do this. There's no rule. But if a revolution of love moves in on your life if this kind of New Testament reality moves in on your life you may find yourself doing some very unusual things in the days to come.

Even if some friends think you're crazy. And they continued daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. Gladness and singleness of heart.

Isn't this what we need in the church today? Isn't this worth laying aside some of our arguments some of our secondary areas? Do you realize how impossible it is to unite evangelicals today? We are from so

many groups and certain churches are strong in one country and don't exist in another country. And most of us are far more nationalistic than we would know. Some here are from brethren assemblies but do you want to know there are some countries where there are almost no brethren assemblies? Indonesia is one of them.

Some of you are from Pentecostal type churches. You want to know there are some countries where there are hardly any Pentecostal churches. Some of you of course are from Anglican churches and you know that in most countries in the world they do not exist.

So how in the world can we be denominational and still live in such a small earth where you can travel so quickly? And as I have been in so many different countries I have found in one country one group alive in another country they're dead. In some places the Salvation Army is going strong for Christ in other places dead as a doornail. And so I believe that sectarianism denominationalism that excludes others is foolishness.

I'm not saying you can't be loyal to your denomination to a degree but your ultimate loyalty must always be to Christ to his word and you must always sense your oneness with all Christians especially if you're going to go out of your own backyard. May God open our minds deliver us from our narrowness. So many evangelicals are so narrow theologically let's be narrow on the basic areas let's not budge that's a big enough battle much less all the trivialities that we get fighting over.

And let's believe God for the singleness of heart and you will find throughout the book of Acts a word coming back again and again and if God could get us in these weeks here together in one accord I want to tell you he could shake these lands we're talking about for Jesus Christ. And if he doesn't get us into one accord and if he's not able to unite us because of our stubbornness or our stupidity then we're not going to shake any countries for Jesus Christ. Praising God verse 47 having favor with all the people and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

You say that's too Calvinistic I didn't put it there. I believe that there is a balance between Calvinism and Arminianism. Boy a minister got me on the spot one time in London at a luncheon he jumped right out of his chair and he said look are you a Calvinist? I said yes sir I'm an Arminianized Calvinist 100%.

Boy he didn't know what to say. You say I don't even know what those words mean. Good you haven't suffered from a lack of anything.

But I believe God can keep us together though we have differences of viewpoint even in our leadership on some of these areas. He's done it for 14 years almost and I believe he can do it for 14 more. And my soul has many times been refreshed from people of different theology.

I want this singleness of mind I want us to be of one accord I want us to be a book of Acts army. Most of this controversy you don't find in the book of Acts. Christians were too busy winning souls too busy planting churches too busy moving like a mighty army.

It was later mind you it didn't take long that they got so wangled up in every kind of controversy you can ever think of. Praising God how little time we take to praise God. Do you really think the church spends as much time praising God as they do arguing? Dividing? Engaging in controversy? They don't.

If there was more praise there would be more unity. We've seen of course already in Acts chapter 4 there's not much time to go much further. But I want you to look at 4.12 because I think it's very important.

Neither is there salvation in any other for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. You say how do we know the heathen are lost? Acts 4.31 Those Buddhists those Muslims those pagans there is no hope no biblical hope. You say I don't understand it.

Beloved in some ways I don't understand it either but I leave it with God. Judgment is not my job. My job is evangelism.

My job is not to measure the temperature in hell. My gospel and my job is to preach the gospel. I don't understand hell but I know there's no hope for those outside of Jesus Christ.

I have to follow the Bible. Even if the tendency today is philosophy and psychology and this and that this movement is built on this book and must remain on this book. And this book says neither is there salvation in any other for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.

Only the name of Jesus Christ is referring to Christ. Verse 10 Jesus himself said I am the way I am the truth I am the life. No man cometh to the Father except by me.

Except by me. And if you don't believe those Indians out there or those Muslims or those Frenchmen are lost without Christ I wonder if you should go. I don't think you should.

That isn't our main motivation. Our main motivation is the love of Christ. In one sense of course we should go to people even if they aren't lost.

But because the Bible teaches they are lost you need to believe that. That isn't your main source of motivation but it's truth. And it has to be part of your theology.

Search the scriptures. I believe if there was any other way to save man other than Jesus Christ God's Son that God would have found that way, don't you? Do you think God would have sent his Son if there was some other way to save the heathen? No, I can't believe that. It's a Biblical principle of the Book of Acts that these men believed people were lost.

They preached it. They lived it. They spread it.

There is no other name. Repent and be baptized. Why were they so bold? Because they knew they had the truth.

Some of us go out tiptoeing out in our witness for Christ wondering, well maybe the Buddhists are right after all. Maybe Muhammad was really the best bloke that came along after Christ. Too much tiptoeing evangelism in the 20th century that needs to be replaced with Book of Acts boldness.

Declaration! Paul, the great theologian said, I choose to know nothing among you save Christ and Christ crucified. Many gospel sermons today you'll hardly even hear the mention of the cross or the blood. The bold proclamation is what we find in the Book of Acts.

Then there in chapter 5 when they were told not to speak you say, oh why is this O.M. running around in Turkey and Libya all these closed countries? They're running ahead of God. Oh, I've heard some interesting criticisms against this movement. I could write a fantastic book.

Peter had the same problem. They told him to be quiet and go somewhere else. Put him in jail and beat him killed Stephen.

Where do you find that kind of Christianity today? What did Peter say in the 29th verse of chapter 5? We ought to obey God rather than man. And if man says I can't take the word of God to his country and God says we must go into all the world how long does it take you to make your decision? Shouldn't take you any longer than it took Peter. We must obey God.

What happened? They went back again. When they went back again and witnessed they were beaten. The last part of chapter 5 verse 40 And to him they agreed and when they had called the apostles and beaten them commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus let them go.

Now these men should have reorganized had a committee meeting planned a new strategy and had to avoid all this ruckus. What did they do? What did they do? And they departed from the presence of the council rejoicing. Rejoicing.

And that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And that's book of Acts Christianity. That's not American noise.

That's not English circus riding. That's book of Acts New Testament reality. Rejoicing privilege suffering for Jesus Christ.

And you know if it wasn't for hundreds of men who burnt on the stake and suffered for Jesus Christ in this country of England there wouldn't even be a church here. Not a true church. And so after that what did they do? Daily in the temple and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

Somebody says oh what's this O.M. always going house to house? Herbert W. Armstrong the great false cultist wrote a whole article about against going house to house. Well that's good. That gives me four more reasons why I should go.

But here's the greater reason. Verse 42. Daily in the temple and in every house every house they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ.

I don't know how many thousand times million times as many houses we have today. The world population then was very very small. We have more people in Uttar Pradesh India one state than they had in the whole known world of that day that Paul was living in.

Just in UP. One little O.M. team running around a handful of other missionaries in the whole state. Thank God he's given us a few other modern means to reach people including literature.

Let's go to every house and if it's a country that says we can't go to the house then we'll just go anyway. Teaching and preaching Jesus Christ. This is book of Acts.

Christianity. Christians filled with the spirit. Christians united locked together of one heart of one mind.

Christians unselfishly giving everything of their possessions of their goods of everything to whoever the need was. They could only meet physical needs. We today through literature and printing it can meet spiritual needs.

Convert our possessions into Christian literature. Christians fearless bold who believed that Jesus was the only way and went out to tell it to the whole world. Christians who weren't afraid to suffer who counted it privilege to be beaten for Jesus Christ who went back even willing for more because they knew it was a life and death situation.

Christians who took the command of Jesus to be witnesses seriously. And who formed an operation mobilization in their day and spread across the world in every possible means of travel. Just read about the Apostle Paul and his travels.

True he stayed in some places for a long time. We believe in that. We do that.

But there were other times when he wasn't in a place preaching the gospel seemingly more than a few hours. May God give us Book of Acts reality. This tonight is but a taste.

Take the Book of Acts. Read it. Study it.

Let its pulse be your pulse. Let its boldness become your boldness. Let its witness become your witness.

Let its suffering be your suffering. That's the only way the world will be reached in our generation. Let us pray.

Our God and Father we come to you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we praise you for this book that throbs with love and power and witness and unity. We praise you Lord that you can and will fill us with your Holy Spirit.

That you will keep us united. That you will baptize us with that love that comes from above not once but oh God many times in the months and years to come. We thank you Lord.

There are things in the Book of Acts we acknowledge we don't understand. Things that theologians have argued over for years. Things that people have taken out of context and formed a dozen different opposing groups.

But oh God it's not what we don't understand in this Book of Acts that is bothering us tonight. It's oh Lord what we understand all too well. And we know is often missing from our own lives.

So speak oh God. Give us a heart to obey. That we may live lives New Testament reality.

In Jesus name. Amen.

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