

Are You a New Testament Christian?

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Preacher: John Blanchard

[0 : 0 0] Thank you very much, Peyton. Great job. I am thrilled this morning to be able to introduce to you our guest preacher, Dr. John Blanchard.

A lot of you remember him. This is his third time to be with us. For those of you who do not, Dr. Blanchard is an internationally known preacher, teacher, and author.

He and his wife Pam live just outside of London, England. A little town named Banstead.

As much as I would like to think that he flew here just to preach in our church, I have to say that he did not. He comes to this country from time to time.

And since I have discovered that he does, I have given him an open invitation to let me know whenever he's going to be here. Because I would love for him to preach. And I get a lot of positive feedback when I announce that you're going to be here.

[1 : 0 2] I've had several, I won't say really how smart-alecky they are to let me know. I'm really looking forward to this week's sermon. I first heard Dr. Blanchard many years ago when I was in seminary at Fort Worth, Texas.

He came to our church, South Cliff Baptist Church, to lead a Bible conference. That's when I first learned about him and his ministry and became familiar with his books.

He has written numerous books. His specialty, I guess you might say, is evangelism and defending the Christian faith, apologetics.

Or, one way to think about it, he has been gifted by God to be able to answer a lot of questions that not just unbelievers, but real skeptics, even atheists, ask.

Two that have stood out to me, Ultimate Questions, is a book that I think there's over 14 million in print in what, I read this 60 different languages.

[2 : 1 7] It has been used by God probably more than any booklet tract in these last 50 years than anything else.

It's still being used today. He does not have them here today, but I would encourage you, if you know people that you would like to engage in an evangelistic conversation, talk to them about their relationship with the Lord.

And you know they've got a lot of questions, and you know they'll read. Get a copy of this. If you know that they really will read, if they really are interested, get a copy of his book, Write with God.

I've given several of these away, and many of these over the years. And God has truly blessed those efforts throughout the world. Throughout the world.

Not just among English-speaking people. Today, he is going to be, he has three books available. These books are designed to really help us to be better prepared to explain to people what we believe and why we believe, especially people who are maybe antagonistic.

[3 : 26] And I've asked him to share a little bit about them before he preaches this morning, because they are helpful small books for us to become better equipped to live in this postmodern skeptical world and really not just say what we believe, to be able to defend it, articulate it well.

I want to read one quote from John MacArthur as he was endorsing one of Dr. Blanchard's books. For those of you who know John MacArthur, you know that he doesn't say things he doesn't really believe.

He doesn't mean. He says this, John Blanchard is a master when it comes to applying the timeless truths of the Bible to these postmodern times.

And that's the real reason why I wanted him to come and preach, why he has this open invitation. God has gifted him to communicate the truth of his word in a very clear, understandable, applicable kind of way.

So hear him prayerfully and carefully this morning with the intent of hearing what the Lord is saying to you so you can do it. Dr. Blanchard? Well, I will ask the Lord to forgive your pastor for those generous words and then to forgive me for enjoying them all.

[4 : 56] Excuse this, but those who were here for the first service will know that I struggled for about five minutes with an army of frogs in my throat, so I'm trying to drown them before we begin.

But seriously, thank you for those very kind words. And I do remember preaching at Southcliffe and at Southwestern Seminary all those years ago.

Your pastor then was Paul Burleson, and I've subsequently preached many times for his son, Wade Burleson, in various places in Oklahoma. So you and I, in a sense, go back a long way even though the link was kind of a little tenuous.

I'm not sure about an invitation to come back to Pickens. I think it's an order. My very good friends, Trey and Cinder Lee, over at Kiawee, arranged some of my itinerary in this part of the world.

And after I'd first preached here, your pastor said to Trey, whenever he comes here, he will preach for me again. That's not an invitation. That's an order. And I don't like to fall foul of American pastor, so I just do what I'm told.

[6 : 07] You know, he's the head of the house, but I just do whatever he asks me to do. So he instructed me to be here this morning, and here I am. Let me say just a word, although he's stolen them from me now about the three books that he mentioned.

That's okay. He's got them here. And this will be very brief for one reason that you will discover. Thank you. Very, very shortly. I had three books published last year that were deliberately aimed to help Christians get the gospel across to other people.

For example, your country and mine have never been so invaded by atheistic and agnostic thoughts. Christianity is being pushed into the background, and it's widely suggested that there is no God, and if there is, how in the world can we come to know him?

So I've written this little book called Does Atheism Make Sense? Does it make cosmic sense, rational sense, human sense, moral sense? And then having showed that it doesn't, I go on to show that God does answer all those questions in a positive way.

One of the areas that people will bring up to you and may bring up to you as you're seeking to witness to them would be, yes, but science now has shown that we don't need God.

[7 : 17] Science answers so many questions. Why do we need God? So this book is called Science Fiction. Has science disposed of God? And the other is, and they're all so relevant today, we now live, your country and mine and elsewhere in the world, in such a pluralistic society, religiously speaking.

And so Christianity is one of many faiths that are pushing very hard to make their case known. Hinduism, Islam, of course, Buddhism, and many others. So the question we need to ask as Christians is, or that they may ask and we need to answer, is, well, why Jesus?

What makes Jesus so different and exclusive from all the others? That's what I've tried to address in that book. Now, all of that said, there are these three titles. One of them was so in such demand we had to fly it over literally within the past few days from the UK to be here for this morning, and they're not going to be available anywhere else on this particular tour.

The good news is that they're available as a package of three at a discounted price. The bad news is this. The first service was peopled by a plague of locusts with the result there are ten sets left.

So I'm sure some of you thought there was always an advantage to be sitting in the back rows of the church. And this morning, you're right because you will get them before the others.

[8 : 45] And I am sorry about that, but let me just say this and quite seriously, if at the end of this morning service, when, of course, they will all have gone very quickly, if your pastor feels there is scope to get some more in so that more of you may get the books, I will arrange with him that that can be done, even if the discount isn't quite as you see it here today, but at least it will be a very reasonable cost and we can get them in for you.

At this morning service, I want to ask you this question. I want you to imagine that it became an offense in this country to be a Christian.

I've never been more interested in American politics as I am at the moment. Some of you have never been less interested, I guess. But it's simply fascinating to see what's happening in the United States and then see what's happening in the UK and to see actually a correlation between the two.

They're actually in the same ballpark and it really is fascinating the way new laws are being brought in and in our country, tragically, I mean, a conservative, small c, a conservative government passing laws that are pushing biblical truth further and further into the margin.

Suppose you reach the stage where here in the US it was a federal offense to be a Christian. Now just imagine that.

[10 : 13] Here's my question. Would there be enough evidence to convict you? Now I know that's turning things in an interesting direction, but just use your imagination again.

It's a federal offense. You know, there's a tweet from, I can't think of his name, but anyway, there's a tweet from somebody who says it's now a federal offense to be a Christian and you're holed up before a local judge or some kind of higher court and you are charged with being a Christian and the evidence is called for.

So your husband or your wife or your children or your parents or all of the above, the people with whom you work, the people with whom you socialize and they give evidence as to the quality of your life, the things you see and read, the things you say, the things you do, the way you react and you yourself are called to the witness stand and you give your own evidence on your behalf.

And now the judge considers his verdict. And instead of having all the statutes of a couple hundred years behind him and law cases that he can refer and then link his judgment to one that was given by that judge here or this judge over here, what he has in front of him is a New Testament.

And so all the evidence that has been given in your place and by you yourself, he now brings alongside the teaching of the New Testament.

[11 : 48] And he has to decide whether on the basis of what he's heard from them and from you, whether you are a New Testament Christian.

And my question remains, would there be enough evidence to convict you? Now the obvious way to find out is to go to the New Testament.

And so that's what we're going to do. In fact, the entire New Testament from beginning to end. So I'll just give you a warning about that. My plane doesn't leave Greenville until early on Tuesday afternoon, so we have plenty of time.

We're going to go through the entire New Testament in this service. The front doors are locked. You can't get out. We're fully ready to settle down to this. Let me put it this way, and after a little while, you'll begin to see it's not going to be quite as long as you thought.

But we'll be finished by three o'clock. I'll guarantee you that. Some of you look very pale. And the turkey in the oven is looking even paler.

[12 : 52] The New Testament begins with the Gospel. It begins with the Gospel. Now there's only one Gospel. We say there are four Gospels, and I know what we mean by that.

One written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, but they're all telling the same story from a different perspective in a different manner with their own style of writing and so forth.

But there is only one Gospel. It is said that the first of the four Gospel books to be written was the Gospel of Mark, and it begins with these words, the beginning of the Gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

So here's my point. The New Testament begins with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And the New Testament Christian begins with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

I want you to imagine that you had no religion at all, and you decided the time had come to pursue the religious idea. Was there some kind of religion that was the right one after all?

[13 : 57] So you go into a library, for example, where you would find, amongst other things, the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics. It runs to 13 enormous volumes.

And so there you are, you're going to take some hours and come back day after day and take many more hours, thumbing through these thousands of pages, seeking to find the answer to the question.

It's been said, man is a religious animal. He must and will have some religion. And so you're looking for one. And you would find it very easy to dismiss some of the religions you read about.

For example, you'd come across something called animism, which says that you can worship wood and fire and stone and trees and mountains. And you say, well, that sounds very interesting, but that can't possibly be right.

Then you might come across the religion of Hinduism. And you say, look, I'm looking for, I'm looking for God, a God, the God, whom I can worship.

[14 : 58] But, trouble about Hinduism, it has 33 million gods. So how about I know which is the right one and do I have to worship all of them and in what way? Well, you'd pretty soon turn away from that, I'm sure.

You might then turn to something called Buddhism. And you'd begin to study that and then discover, actually, it has no deities at all. So if I'm trying to find the one true God, I certainly won't find it in a religion that has no God.

You might study, as well you might in these days, Islam. And when you did, you would discover, well, this God is remote.

I cannot have a personal relationship with Him and I really don't like that idea at all. you'd come across something called polytheism, which simply says there are many gods and I need to spend time there.

Just many gods, any of whom might be the right one, that gets you nowhere either. You'd come across something called pantheism, which says everything is God and God is everything.

[16 : 03] And you say, well, that is ridiculous. That means I could worship the floor I'm standing on or the roof over my head or a hot dog. Everything is God and God is everything.

Well, that can't possibly be right. But then, having dismissed all of those, you might then turn to the Bible and you would come across this statement by the Apostle Paul without giving you time to turn it up.

Let me read it to you. So you would be saying, now all of those others, they would all still leave me lost, absolutely lost, cut off from God, unable to be in touch with Him, unable to have a living relationship with Him, unable to get all the blessings that He could bring into my life.

Now listen to this. Here's the Apostle Paul. Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.

Wait a minute. we're not now talking of animists, Buddhists, Muslims, pantheists, polytheists. Paul is now referring to Jewish people.

[17 : 16] And when Paul wrote those words, the Jews were the only people who believed in there being one God, the one true God, the creator of heaven and earth, the sustainer of everything, of all reality, outside of himself.

But here's the Apostle Paul saying of these people who had rejected the Greek and the Roman ideas of there being many gods and believed in there being one sovereign creator and sustainer of the universe and Paul says about them, my heart's desire for them, my heart is breaking for them for this reason, I want them to be saved.

So they're lost too. So they believe in one God, the God, the only true God, and Paul says they're lost. He goes on, I can testify about them, they are jealous for God, I mean they really want to know God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge since they disregarded the righteousness that comes from God and went about to establish their own.

It's such a vivid word. You can just imagine if you read the Old Testament, all the rituals and the rites and the ceremonies and the services and the sacrifices. All of this that they went through, you can just see them scuttling around, if I dare to say it, like ants trying to find the answer to something.

So here they are trying to fulfill all of these rites and rituals, all these services and ceremonies. Paul says this is their problem. They are going about to establish their own righteousness, build up their own case before God, and they have neglected, which is the same as rejected, they have disregarded the righteousness that comes from God.

[19 : 02] They sought to establish their own. They did not submit to God's righteousness. And then he adds, Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

And Paul knew exactly what he was talking about. He says this about the, when writing to the Philippians. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more.

Circumcised the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, in regard to the law, a Pharisee, as for zeal, persecuting the church, as for legalistic righteousness, all the bits and pieces of legalistic righteousness, as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

So when Paul says, look, my heart is breaking, not of course for people who are atheists and agnostics and worshipping Greek and Roman gods, but my heart is also breaking for people who are ethnically Jews.

And they do believe in the one true God. So at least they're pointed in the right direction. But they're lost. They're not saved. And the reason they're not saved is this.

[20 : 17] Instead of accepting the righteousness that God has provided, they're going about to establish their own righteousness. They're believing that God grades on a curve and if they check enough boxes, as far as religion is concerned, then God will accept them and receive them into His family, giving them the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Now that was his great concern about them. I wonder if he would say the same about you today. One of the great advantages of coming to a church like this, where I'm here only once a year or never more than that, is that I simply don't know who you are as individuals.

I see your face now looking at me and I don't know where you stand, so I can ask you this question. Is in any way this true of you? If I were to ask you how can you be or are you absolutely sure that you are a New Testament Christian because you have begun not with rites and rituals and ceremonies and walking to the front and responding to altar calls and being baptized and joining a Baptist church.

There'll be countless numbers of those who will never be in heaven. But are you sure that you are a New Testament Christian because you have begun in the only place you can begin which is with Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior.

That is so hugely important. Let me put it this way to you and it may shock you. Nobody becomes a Christian by believing the Bible. Nobody. You say, well I believe this and this and I believe the Bible.

[22 : 02] Good. Well I've got news for you. So does the devil. And James says that in his epistle. You believe in one God? That's fine. So do all the devils in hell and they shudder in terror.

Nobody becomes a Christian without believing the Bible but nobody becomes a Christian merely by believing that what the Bible says is true. Any profession to be a Christian without a personal commitment to Christ is a catastrophic mistake.

You may know the gospel but do you know the Savior? So a New Testament Christian begins with the gospel.

Let me ask that last question again and please think seriously about it as you sit there facing me this morning. You may know the gospel and if you worship in a church as sound as this one with a pastor as good as you have here you should certainly know the gospel but do you know the Savior?

Can you sing the Lord is my shepherd? And if not listen on very carefully. Well secondly the gospel is followed by Acts and you'll be relieved to know that already we've got through four books of the Bible and it is immediately followed by Acts.

[23 : 21] and that's made clear if we read from Ephesians two verses that some of you will know very well. By grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves it's the gift of God not of works so no one can boast and then goes on to say this in verse 10 for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works which he has prepared in advance for us to do.

Or 2 Corinthians 5 if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation. The old has gone the new has come.

Now that doesn't mean that when you become a Christian you become perfect. Charles Haddon Spurgeon once said he'd only met one perfect man and he was a perfect nuisance and some of you ladies are saying yeah I know I married him.

Well let's we'll pass over that for the time being the pastor will hold marriage counseling sessions if you need them but no when you become a person who becomes a Christian doesn't become perfect but hear me carefully he becomes different.

The very word conversion could tell you that. I've lived long enough to know when in my my house in the tiny island on which I live just off the coast of France I can remember when we converted from gas to electricity.

[24 : 43] I mean it's a conversion from one that is a change. so the question I have to ask you this morning in examining the question are you a New Testament Christian is what is different?

Think of the Corinthian verse again old things the old has gone the new has come. How many things have gone in your life? I don't mean and I'm being careful here I don't mean gone permanently and never again do they rear their sinful ugly filthy head but essentially they have gone.

What things have gone in your life? And what things are new in your life? Things that simply as you look back were never there before. Your interest in the gospel.

Your love of God's word. Your willingness to read it and study it. Your prayer life. Your concern for people you know who are not Christians.

you're interested in mission enterprise throughout the world. How many of those things have come and you can say that's when the change happened. So the New Testament begins with the gospel it is immediately followed by Acts and if the Acts aren't there if the change is not there then how can you know that the gospel has taken root in your heart?

[26 : 04] As someone put it the problem is that many people come to church just as they are they sing just as I am and they go away just as they were. Now that's not supposed to be what happens.

Now it is possible of course to have good works and I'm talking of philanthropy and social good works now. It's possible to have good works and not to be a Christian but it is impossible to be a true New Testament Christian and not to have a measure of good works that backs it up.

The Red Cross International as it's now known was founded by a man called Jean-Henri Dunant whose driving force was the teaching of scripture and it does the most staggering almost unbelievable work all around the world so there are good works there but let me tell you of another organization that does amazing good works particularly in some parts of the world it's called the Red Crescent and it has no Christian backing at all it is exactly the opposite and if you were to tell a radical Muslim that the work of the Red Crescent shows that they're Christian you may need the Red Cross or worse so again it's possible to have good work to do good things and not to be a Christian it is impossible to be a true New Testament Christian and not to do good works the change certainly is there and without it all claims are simply not worth the air they are breathed into and James again one of my favorite authors in the New Testament takes us exactly there in his own inimitable and illustrative way listen to him here in chapter 2 what good is it my brothers if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds can such faith save him well there's the rhetorical question here's the person who says

I'm a Christian you examine their lives to see what changes there are and you privately think well I'm not sure I see the kind of difference I would expect there to be in a genuine Christian there but James doesn't leave it there he gives us an illustration which he is so good at suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food if one of you says to him go I wish you well keep warm and well fed but does nothing about his physical needs what good is it and of course the answer is no good at all in the same way faith by itself if it is not accompanied by action is dead I don't think I need to illustrate James' illustration it is so crystal clear and so I won't elaborate he has done the job perfectly well God never does a saving work in the heart without doing a changing work in the life and thirdly and won't you be glad that that's the gospel and acts over we're now into the epistles a new testament

Christian becomes an epistle listen to these words from Paul to the Corinthian church are we beginning to commend ourselves again or do we need like some people letters of recommendation to you or from you you yourselves are our letter written on our hearts known and read by everybody you show that you are a letter from Christ the result of our ministry written not with ink but with the spirit of the living God not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts let me go back over that and read one sentence again you are our letter written on our hearts known and read by everybody here's the point there was an evangelist in England many years ago called Gypsy Smith and he used to say there are five gospels Matthew Mark Luke John and the life of the Christian and he said the trouble is most people don't read the first four and that's true most people outside in this wonderful country of yours this wonderful state of yours most people don't read the gospels the four gospels

[30 : 10] Matthew Mark Luke and John but hear me carefully if you profess to be a Christian and they know that you profess to be a Christian they read you that was Gypsy Smith's point they read you they do if you profess to be a Christian if they know you at first Baptist Pickens every Sunday and on Monday you're at work with them or at home with them or socializing with them they are reading you and you may say something do something express an opinion about something and privately at least privately and maybe more openly than that they say well if that's what Christianity does for you I just don't need it they are reading you outside of the Bible you are the only visible means that God has of demonstrating the power and the relevance of the gospel outside of the Bible you are the only if you're a professing

Christian you are the only visible means that God has of expressing the power and the relevance of the gospel and you say no that can't be right the heavens declare the glory of God the skies proclaim the work of his hands well of course I've heard of that verse I know that verse perfectly well but answer me this question how much of the gospel do you see in the sun the moon the stars the clouds the rivers the trees the flowers how much of the I'm not asking how much of the power of God or the love of God or the imagination of God or the beauty of God my question is specific how much of the gospel do you see in them and the answer is absolutely nothing the only places the gospel is seen is in the word of God the living and enduring word of God and I'm glad to be preaching in a church the position of whose pastor is this what the bible says

God says so the only places are the written word of God and the lives of professing Christians doesn't that bring to your heart as it does to mine a tremendous sense of responsibility I remember the story of two college students who met I guess in seminary and they were discussing various translations of the bible and one said to the other what is your favorite translation he said my mother's and the other guy was thrown back a bit and said your mother's I didn't know she'd written a translation of the bible does she know Hebrew no Greek no then what is her translation his friend said it's a translation into action now what kind of translation are you we have a lot of translations in the world today and a number of paraphrases too I hope that you don't use a paraphrase as your main study of the bible paraphrases can be of some use usually by one person which immediately makes them slightly more dangerous at least slightly more dangerous but are you a paraphrase in other words sure you touch on the general meaning of the bible here and there in your life or are you a good translation of what the word of god says Jesus said I find a most searching thing he who is with me he who is not with me is against me well we know that and perhaps when we're thinking in terms of evangelism we say to someone who may say well I'm not I'm not a committed christian but I'm not against it you understand I'm sort of sitting on the fence I'm in between and then we pile in with no but Jesus said he who is not with me is against me there's no fence on which you can sit if you're not with him you're against him so we're happy enough to go along with that but why don't we complete the sentence which goes like this and he who gathers not with me scatters so my question to you this morning is this as people you mix with outside of the church listen to what you say see how you react watch how you behave are they more likely to be gathered towards the gospel or driven from it are they more likely perhaps privately to begin with to say you know they've got something I don't have and it's not just that they go to church because I know other people who go to church and their lives aren't like that they've got something I haven't got it's a great moment when that happens because it gives you a chance to say what it is or more accurately who it is you have that they don't have but he who isn't gathering with me I mean not dramatically and consciously and immediately but he whose life is not steadily pointing people in the right direction is scattering them abroad isn't that a terrible thing that as a professing

Christian the way you live is driving people further away from the Savior you love and then finally we come to the book of Revelation so we can catch that plane on Tuesday after all because we're nearly through the entire New Testament and the opening words in the book of Revelation are the revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place this life is not all there is there is another and there is a day which will soon take place a day of reckoning a day of judgment and in my view there are two major errors that are being committed and being lived by people who are not committed Christians they both have long names but they're easy to explain the first is universalism there are millions of people in these United States who feel well of course I realize I'm not a committed

Christian I don't go to church don't read my Bible but the great thing is that God is love and therefore at the end of the day whatever failure I've been whatever failures I've shown God's love will wrap his arms around me and draw me to himself with all the rest of humanity forever that is called universalism and you understand why it has that word the other is annihilationism and annihilationism says there is no God and when we die we die and that's the end of it that's the end of the whole story but it's not the end of the story my question is do you know where you are going there's a lovely story told of Albert Einstein the great German scientist traveling in a train one day a number of years ago of course in Germany and the ticket inspector came along and found Einstein doing this and goodness me and he said can I help you he said well I've lost my ticket and in the course of the inspector being there and looking at it suddenly realized who he was and said oh professor don't worry about that

[37 : 37] I know you are that's fine so the train went on stopped at another station again the inspector comes around looking for tickets for those who just joined the train this time found Einstein on his hands and knees looking under the seat and he said can I help you sir he said I'm looking for my ticket and the inspector said sir I told you I don't need your ticket I know who you are and Einstein said I know who I am I don't know where I'm going now I'm sure you know who you are but do you know where you're going there's going to be a great day of judgment of separation and the bible does not teach universalism we'll all be saved nor does it teach annihilationism there is no god there is no heaven there is no hell we'll just be zapped and that's the end of it it does teach that we are answerable to the lord for the lives we live no christian will be lost there's no condemnation to those who are in christ jesus but the bible does speak of rewards and blessings in heaven that are calibrated in ways beyond our reckoning that are related to the kind of lives we live as christians true christians new testament christians know that life is not trivial nothing in life is trivial because for everything in life we are accountable so

I end as I began by asking you the question are you a new testament christian have you begun with the gospel are there acts in your life that show that it has taken root do you recognize realize accept that you are an epistle and that people are reading you that because they don't open this book and read it they've got your life to read is your life likely to draw them towards christ or drive them from him and are you living each day conscious that one day there will be an account and you look and long for the day when you will hear those blessed words enter into the joy of your lord well done good and faithful servant my responsibility to be preaching those truths in these days and as we said earlier in the realm of apologetic seeking to equip christians to answer the questions that others will be asking them hence the three books that were mentioned earlier and hence

I'm afraid the bad news that are only ten sets left but you will be able to talk to your pastor afterwards if you want them beyond this morning's service let's bow our heads in prayer together our heavenly father what we know not teach us and what we have not give us and what we are not make us and we pray in the name of your son our savior amen mom
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