

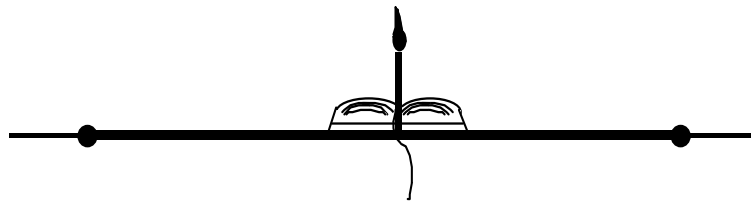
# SCRIPTURE STUDIES

VOL. XIII, No. 7

SEPTEMBER  
2006

"Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord..." Isaiah 1:18

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*Scripture Studies* (ISSN: 1520-4308) is edited by Scott Sperling and published ten times a year by Scripture Studies, Inc., a non-profit organization. It is distributed all over the world by postal mail and via the internet free of charge. If you would like to financially support the publication and distribution of *Scripture Studies*, send contributions to:

**Scripture Studies Inc.  
20 Pastora  
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## Old Testament Study: Exodus 16

Manna, pt. 2,  
by Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

<sup>1</sup>And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. <sup>2</sup>And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: <sup>3</sup>And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger. <sup>4</sup>Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no. <sup>5</sup>And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily. (Ex 16:1-5 AV)

<sup>13</sup>And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. <sup>14</sup>And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. <sup>15</sup>And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat. <sup>16</sup>This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents. <sup>17</sup>And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less. <sup>18</sup>And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man

according to his eating.

<sup>19</sup>And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning. <sup>20</sup>Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them. <sup>21</sup>And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating; and when the sun waxed hot, it melted. <sup>22</sup>And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. <sup>23</sup>And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which ye will bake today, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning. <sup>24</sup>And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. <sup>25</sup>And Moses said, Eat that to day; for to day is a sabbath unto the LORD: to day ye shall not find it in the field. <sup>26</sup>Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none. <sup>27</sup>And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. <sup>28</sup>And the LORD said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? <sup>29</sup>See, for that the LORD hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. <sup>30</sup>So the people rested on the seventh day. <sup>31</sup>And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. (Ex. 13-31 AV)

*[Mr. Pink is enumerating ways in which manna is typical (or symbolic) of God's Word]*

5. *The manna was to be eaten.* This brings us to the central and most important point in connection with our type. The manna was not given simply to look at, or admire; but to be eaten. It was for food. It was God's provision to meet the bodily need of His people Israel. It is thus with the spiritual manna. God's Word is to be turned to practical account. It is given to provide food for our souls. But in order to derive from it the nutriment we require, we need to learn how to feed on the Bread of Life. Just as a neglect of suitable diet or proper feeding in the natural sphere results in a low condition of bodily health, so to neglect our spiritual food or to ignore the laws of spiritual dietetics results in a sickly state of soul. In all correct eating there are three things: appropriation, mastication, as-

similation. Let us consider each one separately.

*Appropriation.* This is a point so obvious that many may think it is unnecessary to develop it. And yet it is just here that so many of God's children fail. When I sit down to a well-spread table it is apparent that I cannot begin to eat everything before me. Nor is that required. The first thing necessary is to appropriate to myself *a portion* of the food before me. No matter how excellent the quality of the food may be, or how tastily prepared, it will avail me nothing to sit and admire it. I need to have a certain portion of it placed upon my own plate, and then to eat it.

It is so with the spiritual manna. The Word of God is exhaustless in its contents. In it is stored sufficiency for the people of God in all ages. There is far more in it than ever I can possibly assimilate. What I must do is make an appropriation to my own soul's needs. And this must be done just as definitely as the eating of my material food. We are anxious to be of real help here to all our readers, so let us be very simple.

Our first need is to *appropriate*. To appropriate means to take unto ourselves, to *make our own*. This was the initial lesson in connection with our salvation. The difference between an unbeliever and a believer is in the employment of the personal pronoun. An unbeliever may speak of *the Savior*, but only the believer can truthfully say "*my Savior*." Faith appropriates unto ourselves. Faith personalizes. When I read in Isaiah 53 concerning Christ that "**He was wounded for our transgression,**" faith individualizes it and says, "**He was wounded for my transgressions.**" This is what we mean by appropriation. We appropriated Christ when we *took Him as our own* personal Savior.

Now, just as we appropriated the Savior, so we need to appropriate the *promises* and the *precepts* of God's Word. For example, when I read in Matthew 7:7, "**Ask, and it shall be given you; speak, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you,**" faith makes it personal, and applying to myself what I read there. I say — "**Ask, and it shall be given me; seek, and I shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto me.**" And again, I read in Romans 8:32, "**He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things,**" and faith takes this to myself. I apply it to my own case, and read, "**How shall He not with Him also freely give me all things?**"

A Scottish pastor once called on an aged saint of God. At once she handed the minister the Bible and asked him to read some portion to her — would that we had more like her today; many a pastor's heart would be rejoiced if, when he called on his members, they desired him to read and pray with them instead of wanting him to discuss the gossip and scandal of the town. As the minister turned the pages he noticed that in the margins had been written the letters T. and T.P. He asked the old lady what these letters signified. She answered, Observe that they are always placed oppo-

site some *promise* of God. T. means “tried,” and T.P., “tried and proven.” She had learned to *feed* on God’s Word. She had appropriated the promises unto *herself*. Have you learned this lesson yet, dear reader? God’s promises will afford *you* no comfort, and minister no strength to you until you make them *your own*. For example, I read in Philippians 4:19, “**My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus,**” and when I really *appropriate* this to myself I shall say, “My God shall supply all Arthur Pink’s need.”

It must be the same with the *precepts* of Scripture. The commands, the exhortations, the admonitions of the Bible, are not so many abstractions. No; they are a revelation of God’s will *for* me. I must read the Scriptures as addressed to me *personally*. When I come to some word of God which condemns my ways, I must not pass it over, but be honest and take it unto myself. May God give all of us grace to daily appropriate *both* His promises *and* precepts.

*Mastication.* After a certain portion of the food spread before me had been placed on my own plate and in my mouth, the next thing is to *chew* it, to chew it slowly and thoroughly. But in this matter most of us are serious offenders. We bolt our food. We swallow it *before* it has been properly masticated. We eat too hurriedly. That is the chief reason why so many suffer from dyspepsia — they give their stomachs the work to do which the teeth were intended to perform. A little food thoroughly masticated will supply far more nutrition to the system than a lot of food swallowed almost whole, and our general health would be much better, too.

This is equally true spiritually. Thousands of God’s children are grievous offenders here. They have never learned to use their *spiritual teeth*. The Bread of Life must be *chewed* if we are to derive from it the sustenance we so much need. What do I mean? This: *meditation stands to reading as mastication does to eating*. Re-read, and ponder this last sentence. Dear reader, you will derive far more benefit from a single verse of Scripture read slowly and prayerfully, and duly meditated upon, than you will from ten chapters read through hurriedly!

Meditation is well-nigh a lost art. And it is at the root of most of our troubles. How many complain that they find it so difficult to *remember* passages of Scripture, passages which they have read perhaps many times. But this is easily explained. It is because the passage was not turned over in the mind; it was not duly “**pondered**” (Luke 2:39). Did you ever notice that the “**Blessed Man**” of Psalm 1 “*meditated*” in God’s Law day and night? Meditation is a wonderful aid to fixing in our minds verses and passages of Scripture.

Let us give an illustration of what we mean by *meditation*. We select one of the most familiar verses in all the Bible (Psalm 23:4), “**Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil. for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.**”

Now, as I begin to meditate upon this I take *each* word or expression *separately* and then *ask* them questions. The first thing that strikes my attention is the way in which the verse opens. It does not say “*When I shall walk through the valley,*” but “*Yea, though I walk.*” I ponder this over. I ask it a question; I say, *why* this indefinite language? Is it not certain that one day *I shall be* called on to walk through the valley of shadows? And then I remember that blessed word in I Corinthians 15:51. “**We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.**” Then I see *why* the Holy Spirit caused this Psalm to open thus.

Next I turn to the central thing in this verse — “**the valley of the shadow of death,**” through which the believer, who *does* die, passes. I ask, *Why* is dying likened to walking through a “**valley**”? What are the thoughts suggested by *this* figure? As I turn this question over in my mind it soon occurs to me (as it should to anyone who gives it a little thought). Why, a “**valley**” suggests peacefulness, fertility beauty, and particularly, *easy travel*. A “**valley**” is the antithesis of a “**mountain,**” which is *difficult and dangerous* to climb. In contradistinction, then, from climbing a mountain which is arduous and hazardous, death is likened to walking through a valley which is *delightful and safe!*

Then I go back to the beginning of the verse, and note thoughtfully each single word. As the believer comes to the end of his earthly pilgrimage he learns that death is simply like passing through a valley. Note he *walks*, not runs, as though afraid. Then, observe, “**though I walk through.**” He does not *stay in* the “**valley,**” but walks through it. Death is only *a door* through which the believer passes from these scenes of sin and sorrow to the realm of glory and bliss.

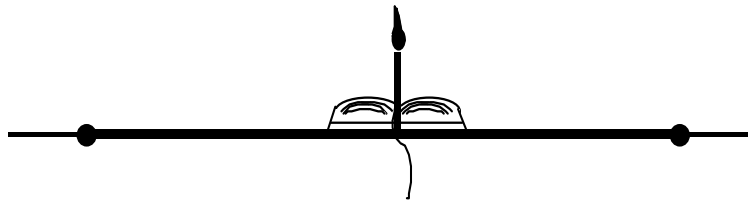
Next I observe that this “**valley**” is called the “**shadow of death.**” Why is this? I must not hurry, or I shall be the loser. Let me continue pondering each word separately, so that I may extract its own peculiar sweetness. What is a “**shadow**”? Ah, how often it terrifies! How many of us, especially during childhood, were *frightened* by shadows! But if we had only walked right up to them we should have quickly discovered they were powerless to injure us. And how many a believer has filled the valley of death with terrifying phantoms! How fearfully has he contemplated these images of his own unbelief! O fellow-believer there is nothing, absolutely nothing, for thee to *fear* in death should it overtake you before the Lord Jesus returns. This valley is called “**the valley of the shadow of death**” because a “**shadow**” is the most *harmless* thing there is!

And now, as though at last the believer has fully grasped the blessedness of these beautiful figures, having discovered that Death is not a difficult and dangerous mountain to climb, but a “**valley**” — peaceful and easy-going — to pass through; having learned that in this valley there is nothing more terrifying than a “**shadow**” he now cries with exulting confidence, “**I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.**”

Here, then, is an example of what we mean by *feeding* on God's Word. *Meditation stands to reading as mastication does to eating.* Take a single verse of Scripture at the beginning of the day; write it out on a slip of paper, and carry it with you wherever you go. Refresh your memory as opportunity occurs by re-reading it. Pray over it, and ask God to give *you* a blessing out of this verse; to reveal to you its beauty and preciousness. Then ponder each word separately. Ask the verse questions and seek to discover its deeper meaning. Suppose you are meditating on Psalm 34:7, "**The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.**" Ask such questions as these: Why "*the angel*"? *Who* is it? "**Encampeth**"; note the perfect tense (continuous) — *what* is suggested by this figure? "**Round about**" — what is meant by this? "**Them that fear Him**" — am I one of them? "**And delivereth them**" — *from what?* — find answer from other Scriptures which speak of "**deliver**" and "**deliverance.**"

*Assimilation.* This is the result of appropriation and mastication, and the chief end in view. The food which I eat is to supply the waste of the body. The food which I have masticated and digested is now taken up into my system, and is transmuted into blood and tissue, thereby affording health and strength. The food thus assimilated appears in the vigor of my step, the strength of my arm, the glow on my face. And now equipped, my system is able to ward off the disease germs which attack my body. All of this has its counterpart in the spiritual man. The food which I have taken into my soul, if properly digested, will build up the new nature. It will nourish faith, and supply the needed strength for my daily walk and service. Moreover, it will be a safeguard against the germs of temptation which assail me — "**Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee**" (Psalm 119:11).

Here, then, is the grand end in view. God's Word is given us to feed upon, and this feeding is for the purpose of translating the Scriptures into the terms of daily living. The principles and precepts of the Bible must be incorporated into my life. The Word has not been assimilated until it has become the regulator of my walk and the dynamo of my service.







## A Classic Study: The Love of Money

### A Classic Study by Thomas Chalmers (1780–1847)

[Here, we begin a study by Thomas Chalmers. It is a discourse on the love of money.]—*Ed.*

#### Discourse on the Love of Money, pt. 1

**“If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, ‘Thou art my confidence’; if I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because mine hand had gotten much; if I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness; and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand; this also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge; for I should have denied the God that is above” (Job 31:24–28)**

What is worthy of remark in this passage is, that a certain affection, only known among the votaries of paganism, should be classed under the same character and have the same condemnation with an affection, not only known, but allowed, nay cherished, into habitual supremacy, all over Christendom. How universal is it among those who are in pursuit of wealth, to make gold their hope, and among those who are in possession of wealth, to make fine gold their confidence! Yet we are here told that this is virtually as complete a renunciation of God as to practice some of the worst charms of idolatry. And it might perhaps serve to unsettle the vanity of those who, unsuspecting of the disease that is in their hearts, are wholly given over to this world, and wholly without alarm in their anticipations of another, — could we convince them that the most reigning and resistless desire by which they are actuated, stamps the same perversity on them, in the sight of God, as He sees to be in those who are worshippers of the sun in the firmament, or are offering incense to the moon, as the queen of heaven.

We recoil from an idolater, as from one who labors under a great moral derangement, in suffering his regards to be carried away from the true God to an idol. But, is it not just the same derangement, on the part of man, that he should love any created good, and in the enjoyment of it

lose sight of the Creator — that he should delight himself with the use and the possession of a gift, and be unaffected by the circumstance of its having been put into his hands by a giver — that thoroughly absorbed with the present and the sensible gratification, there should be no room left for the movements of duty or regard to the being who furnished him with the materials, and endowed him with the organs, of every gratification, — that he should thus lavish all his desires on the surrounding materialism, and fetch from it all his delights, while the thought of Him who formed it is habitually absent from his heart — that in the play of those attractions that subsist between him and the carious objects in the neighborhoods of his person, there should be the same want of reference to God, as there is in the play of those attractions which subsist between a piece of unconscious matter and the other matter that is around it — that all the influences which operate upon the human will should emanate from so many various points in the mechanism of what is formed, but that no practical or ascendant influence should come down upon it from the presiding and the preserving Deity? Why, if such be man, he could not be otherwise, though there were no Deity. The part he sustains in the world is the very same that it would have been, had the world sprung into being of itself; or, without an originating mind, had maintained its being from eternity. He just puts forth the evolutions of his own nature, as one of the component individuals in a vast independent system of nature, made up of many parts and many individuals. In hungering for what is agreeable to his senses, or recoiling from what is bitter or unsuitable to them, he does so without thinking of God, or borrowing any impulse to his own will from anything he knows or believes to be the will of God. Religion has just as little to do with those daily movements of his which are voluntary, as it has to do with the growth of his body, which is involuntary; or, as it has to do, in other words, with the progress and the phenomena of vegetation. With a mind that ought to know God, and a conscience that ought to award to Him the supreme jurisdiction, he lives as effectually without Him, as if he had no mind and no conscience; and, bating a few transient visitations of thought, and a few regularities or outward and mechanical observation, do we behold man running, and willing, and preparing, and enjoying, just as if there was no other portion than the creature — just as if the world, and its visible elements, formed the all with which he had to do.

I wish to impress upon you the distinction that there is between the love of money, and the love of what money purchases. Either of those affections may equally displace God from the heart. But, there is a malignity and an inveteracy of atheism in the former which does not belong to the latter and in virtue of which it may be seen that the love of money is, indeed, the root of all evil.

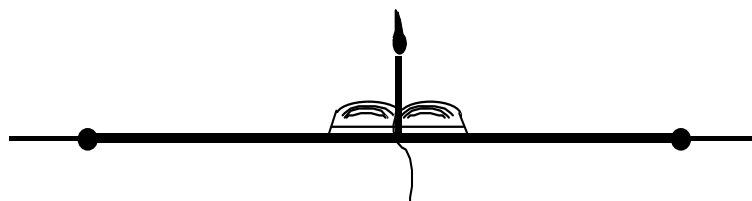
When we indulge the love of that which is purchased by money, the materials of gratification, and the organs of gratification are present with

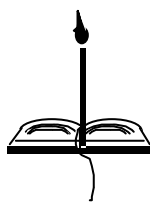
each other – just as in the enjoyments of the inferior animals, and just as in all the simple and immediate enjoyments of man; such as the tasting of good, or the smelling of a flower. There is an adaptation of the senses to certain external objects, and there is a pleasure arising out of that adaptation, and it is a pleasure which may be felt by man, along a right a full infusion of godliness. The primitive Christians, for example, ate their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God. But, in the case of every unconverted man, the pleasure has no such accompaniment. He carries in his heart no recognition of that hand, by the opening of which it is, that the means and the materials of enjoyment are placed within his reach. The matter of the enjoyment is all with which he is conversant. The author of the enjoyment is unheeded. The avidity with which he rushes onward to any of the direct gratifications of nature bears a resemblance to the avidity with which one of the lower creation rushes to its food, or to its water, or to the open field, where it rambles in all the wantonness of freedom, and finds a high-breathed joy in the very strength and velocity of its movements. And the atheism of the former, who has a mind for the sense and knowledge of his Creator, is often as entire as the atheism of the latter, who has it not. Man ought to look to the primary cause of all his blessings, because he is capable of seeing Him. He can trace the stream to its fountain; but still he drinks of the stream with as much greediness of pleasure, and as little recognition of its source, as the animal beneath him. In other words, his atheism, while tasting the bounties of providence, is just as complete, as is the atheism of the inferior animals. But theirs proceeds from their incapacity of knowing God. His proceeds from his not liking to retain God in his knowledge (see Rom. 1:28). He may come under the power of godliness, if he would. But he chooses rather that the power of sensuality should lord it over him, and his whole man is engrossed with the objects of sensuality.

But a man differs from an animal in being something more than a sensitive being. He is also a reflective being. He has the power of thought, and inference, and anticipation, to signalize him above the beasts of the field, or of the forest; and yet will it be found, in the case of every natural man, that the exercise of those powers, so far from having carried him nearer, has only widened his departure from God, and given a more deliberate and willful character to his atheism, than if he had been without them altogether.

In virtue of the powers of mind which belong to him, he can carry his thoughts beyond the present desires and the present gratification. He can calculate on the visitations of future desire, and on the means of its gratification. He can not only follow out the impulse of hunger that is now upon him; he can look onwards to the successive and recurring impulses of hunger which await him, and he can devise expedients for relieving it.

Out of that great stream of supply, which comes direct from heaven to earth, for the sustenance of all its living generations, he can draw off and appropriate a separate rill of conveyance, and direct it into a reservoir for himself. He can enlarge the capacity, or he can strengthen the embankments of this reservoir. By doing the one, he augments his proportion of this common tide of wealth which circulates through the world, and by doing the other, he augments his security for holding it in perpetual possession. The animal who drinks out of the stream thinks not whence it issues. But man thinks of the reservoir which yields to him his portion of it. And he looks no further. He thinks not that to fill it, there must be a great and original fountain, out of which there issues a mighty flood of abundance for the purpose of distribution among all the tribes and families of the world. He stops short at the secondary and artificial fabric which he himself has formed, and out of which, as from a spring, he draws his own peculiar enjoyments; and never thinks either of his own peculiar supply fluctuating with the variations with the will of the great by unseen director of all things. It is true, that if this main and originating fountain be, at any time, less copious in its emission, he will have less to draw from it to his own reservoir; and in that very proportion will his share of the bounties of providence be reduced. But still it is to the well, or receptacle, of his own striking out that he looks, as his main security for the relief of nature's wants, and the abundant supply of nature's enjoyments. It is upon his own work that he depends in this matter, and not on the work or the will of Him who is the author of nature; who gives rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, and fills every heart with good and gladness. And thus it is that the reason of man, and the retrospective power of man, still fail to carry him, by an ascending process, to the first cause. He stops at the instrumental cause, which, by his own wisdom and his own power, he has put into operation. In a word, the man's understanding is overrun with atheism, as well as his desires. The intellectual as well as the sensitive part of his constitution seems to be infected with it. When, like the instinctive and unreflecting animal, he engages in the act of direct enjoyment, he is like it, too, in its atheism. Even when he rises above the animal, and in the exercise of his higher and larger faculties, he engages in the act of providing for enjoyment, he still carries his atheism along with





## New Testament Study: Matthew 24:32-41

### The Olivet Discourse – pt. 4, by Scott Sperling

<sup>32</sup>“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. <sup>33</sup>Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. <sup>34</sup>I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. <sup>35</sup>Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

<sup>36</sup>“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. <sup>37</sup>As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup>For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; <sup>39</sup>and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>40</sup>Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. <sup>41</sup>Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. <sup>42</sup>Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.”

Jesus is in the midst of a discourse in which He answers a question from His disciples about **“when [the destruction of the Temple will] happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age”** (Matt. 24:3). In verses 32 and following, Jesus speaks of how His disciples should react when they witness the signs Jesus has spoken of.

First, Jesus gives a parable that teaches us that His disciples should not be taken by surprise as they see God’s plan for the last days begin to unfold: **“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right**

**at the door**" (vss. 32–33). Jesus' disciples should be attuned to the spiritual signs of the times. They should be able to perceive and recognize when God is working in the world, for His eternal purpose. Earlier in His ministry, Jesus chided the Pharisees for not recognizing God's work through Jesus: **"When evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times"** (Matt. 16:2–3). Jesus' followers must not be like the Pharisees, but rather must be able to see God's hand at work in the happenings on earth.

Jesus continues: **"Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened"** (vss. 33–34). When He uses the term **"all these things"** in verse 33 (as opposed to **"that time"**, in verses 23 and 30), Jesus seems to be referring back to the signs He mentioned in verses 5 through 8—false Christs; **"wars and rumors of wars"; "famines and earthquakes in various places"**—about which He said, **"All these are the beginnings of birth pains"** (vs. 8). So, in verse 34, Jesus seems to be indicating that that **"generation"** would witness the **"beginnings of birth pains"**. And indeed they did. That generation did not pass away before the city of Jerusalem itself was utterly destroyed. **"Within fifty years the city was wiped out, the Temple razed, the whole region reduced to appalling devastation, and the world's obstinacy rose up against God. A furious passion raged to destroy the doctrine of salvation, false teachers came up to pervert the true Gospel with their impostures, religion was shocked in amazing ways, and the whole company of the godly was wretchedly harassed. Although the same evils continued without a break for many centuries to follow, Christ still spoke truly, saying the faithful would actually and openly experience before the end of one generation how true His oracle was, for the Apostles suffered the same things as we see today"** [Calvin, 97].

And so, the **"beginnings of birth pains"** has already occurred. Ever since those times, all of Christ's followers should be in a constant state of excitement and expectation that His return will be soon. Just as the **"beginnings of birth pains"** has already occurred, so also will everything Jesus has prophesied be fulfilled. Jesus assures us: **"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away"** (vs. 35). **"The accomplishment of these prophecies might seem to be delayed, and intervening events might seem to disagree with them, but do not think that therefore the word of Christ is fallen to the ground, for that shall never pass away: though it be not fulfilled, either in the time or in the way that we have prescribed; yet, in God's time, which is the best time, and in God's way, which is the best way, it shall certainly be fulfilled. Every word of Christ is very pure, and therefore very sure"** [Henry].

**“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away”** (vs. 35). Note that with this verse, Jesus accomplishes two things. First, He declares the certainty that what He proclaimed will be accomplished. Second, He declares the temporal nature of this universe: **“Heaven and earth will pass away.”** This agrees with John’s prophecy in the book of Revelation: **“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away”** (Rev. 21:1).

Now, about **“that day”**, Jesus tells us: **“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father”** (vs. 36). “Christ wishes the day of His coming to be so hoped for and looked for that yet no one should dare to ask when it will come. He wants His disciples to walk in the light of faith and, without knowing times with certainty, to expect the revelation with patience. Beware then not to worry more than the Lord allows over details of time... It would be threefold, fourfold madness to grudge submission to the ignorance which not even the Son of God refused to accept, for our sake” [Calvin, 98].

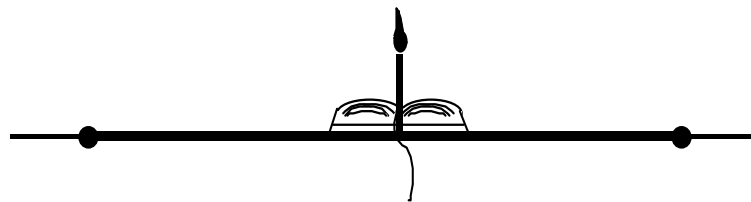
There are some who are bothered that Jesus, in His incarnation, did not know the **“day or hour”** of His return. They ask, “Is not Jesus deity? Does He not know everything?” Certainly this is true of His heavenly existence. But on earth, Jesus chose to take on limitations of humanity. In His human body, He did not have full knowledge. “We read of Him at twelve years of age that He **‘advanced in wisdom and stature’** (see Luke 2:52). If He then advanced in wisdom, He did not cease advancing at the age of twenty or of thirty. If His knowledge was incomplete at twelve, it was still incomplete at thirty” [Broadus, 493]. “This is clearly associated with those limitations of Deity that were not only inevitable during the earthly life of our Lord, but inherent in the very idea of the Incarnation; for the Gospels seem unanimous that our Lord suspended use of His Godhead during most of His earthly life and that His utterances partook of this accepted position” [Thomas, 352]. “As for Christ the man not knowing the last day, it detracts in no way from His divine nature, other than that He was mortal” [Calvin, 99]. As He took on death, so He also took on other aspects of humanity. “There is something beautiful in the thought that He lived His life on earth as man, not using His own Divine power but receiving knowledge and power every moment from His Father (see John 5:19-20)” [Thomas, 352]. In this way, we live as He did.

But this, Jesus does tell us: **“As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man”** (vss. 37–39). In general, and to most of the world, the end will come as a total surprise, just as the flood came as a total surprise to those who were de-

stroyed by it. “Christ’s coming, like the flood, will be sudden, unexpected, universal in its effects, and terrible to the ungodly, although they will be utterly unconcerned” [Spurgeon, 354]. Concerning when it will happen, “we only know that it will be a very sudden event. Our plain duty then is to live always prepared for His return” [Ryle, 321].

One reason that the return of Christ will come as a great surprise to the world is because the world chooses not to believe that He will return. In fact, those of the world mock Christians who believe such a thing. Peter foresaw that this would be the case: **“First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, ‘Where is this “coming” He promised?’ Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation. But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men”** (II Peter 3:3–7).

Christ’s return will be accompanied by an extraordinary event: **“Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left”** (vs. 40–41). This is the **“gathering of the elect”**, spoken of in verse 31. “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, each party shall be separated from the other forevermore. Wives shall be separated from husbands, parents from children, brothers from sisters, masters from servants, preachers from hearers. There shall be no time for repentance, or a change of mind, when the Lord appears: all shall be taken as they are, and reap according as they have sown” [Ryle, 327–328]. This **“gathering of the elect”** (popularly known as “the rapture”) is also similar to what happened in the **“days of Noah”**, God’s people were taken away and sheltered from the judgment of God. As Paul tells us: **“For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ”** (I Thess. 4:9).







## A Topical Study: Contentment

### The Art of Divine Contentment, pt. 2 by Thomas Watson (1620-1686)

[Here, we continue a study by Thomas Watson, concerning being content with the life that our loving God has made for us.]—*Ed.*

**I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content (Philippians 4:11, AV).**

#### Introduction to the Text - pt. 2

I come now to the main thing, the lesson itself: **“In whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”**

Here was a rare piece of learning indeed, and certainly more to be wondered at in Paul, that he knew how to turn himself to every condition, than all the learning in the world besides, which hath been so applauded in former ages by Julius Caesar, Ptolemy, Xenophon, the great admirers of learning.

The text hath but few words in it—In every state contentment; but if that be true which one Fulgentius said, that the most golden sentence is ever measured by brevity and suavity, then this is a most accomplished speech: here is much in a little. The text is like a precious jewel, little in quantity, but great in worth and value.

The main proposition I shall insist upon is this—That a gracious spirit is a contented spirit. The doctrine of contentment is very superlative; and till we have learned this, we have not learned to be Christians.

1. It is a hard lesson. Even angels in heaven had not learned it; they were not contented. Though their estate was very glorious, yet they were still soaring aloft, and aimed at something higher, as alluded to in Jude: **“The angels which kept not their first estate,”** (Jude 6). They kept not their estate, because they were not contented with their estate. Our first parents, clothed with the white robe of innocence in paradise, had not learned to be content; they had aspiring hearts, and thinking their human nature too low and homely, desired to be crowned with the Deity, and be as gods (see Gen. 3:5). Though they had the choice of all the trees in the garden, yet none would content them but the tree of knowledge, which they supposed would have been as eye-salve to have made them omniscient. Oh then, if this lesson were so hard to learn in innocence, how shall we find it, who are clogged with corruption?

2. It is of universal extent, it concerns all. It concerns rich men. One would think it needless to press those to contentment whom God has

blessed with great estates, but rather persuade them to be humble and thankful; nay, but I say, "Be content." Rich men have their discontents as well as others, as appears, when they have a great estate, yet they are discontented that they have no more; they would make the hundred talents a thousand. A man in wine, the more he drinks, the more he thirsts. Covetousness is a dry dropsy: an earthly heart is like the grave, that is never satisfied (see Prov. 30:16). Therefore I say to you rich men, "Be content."

Rich men, if we may suppose them to be content with their estates (which is very seldom), yet, though they have estate enough, they have not honor enough; if their barns are full enough, yet their turrets are not high enough. They would be somebody in the world, like Theudas, who boasted himself to be somebody (see Acts 5:36). They never go so cheerfully as when the wind of honor and applause fills their sails; if this wind be down, they are discontented. One would think Haman had as much as his proud heart could desire; he was set above all the princes, advanced upon the pinnacle of honor to be the second man in the kingdom (see Esth. 3:1); yet in the midst of all his pomp, because Mordecai would not uncover and kneel, he is discontented (see verse 2), and full of wrath (see verse 5); and there is no way to assuage this pleurisy of revenge, but by shedding all the Jews' blood, and offering them up in sacrifice. This eager desire for honor is seldom allayed without blood; therefore I say to you rich men, "Be content."

Rich men, if we may suppose them to be content with their honor and magnificent titles, yet they have not always contentment in their relations. She that lies in the bosom, may sometimes blow the coals, as Job's wife, who in a fit would have him fall out with God Himself: "**Curse God and die**" (Job 2:9). Sometimes children cause discontent; how often is it seen that the mother's milk nourishes a viper! And he that once sucked her breast, goes about to suck her blood! Parents do often of grapes gather thorns, and of figs thistles. Children are sweetbrier; like the rose, which is a fragrant flower, but, as Basil said, it has its prickles. Our relative comforts are not all pure wine, but mixed; they have in them more dregs than spirits, and are like that river Plutarch speaks of, where the waters in the morning run sweet, but in the evening run bitter. We have no charter of exemption granted us in this life; therefore rich men had need be called upon to be contented.

The doctrine of contentment also concerns poor men. You that do suck so liberally from the breasts of Providence, be content; it is a hard lesson, therefore it had need be set upon the sooner. How hard is it when the livelihood is even gone, a great estate boiled away almost to nothing, then to be content. The means of subsistence is in scripture called our life, because it is the very sinews of life. The woman in the gospel spent all her living upon the physicians (see Luke 8:43); in the Greek it is, "She spent her whole life upon the physicians", because she spent her means by which she should live. It is much when poverty has clipped our wings, then to be content; but, though hard, it is excellent: and the apostle here had learned in every state to be content.

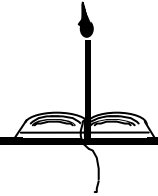
God had brought Paul into as great variety of conditions, as ever we read of any man, and yet he was content; else surely he could never have gone through it with so much cheerfulness. See into what vicissitudes this blessed apostle was cast. "**We are troubled on every side**"—there was the sadness of his condition—"yet not distressed"—there was his con-

contentment in that condition; **“we are perplexed”**—there is his affliction—**“but not in despair”**—there is his contentment (see II Cor. 4:8). And if we read a little further—**“In affliction, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults,”** etc. (II Cor. 6:4-5), there is his trouble; and behold his contentment. **“As having nothing, and yet possessing all things”** (vs. 10). When the apostle was driven out of all, yet in regard of that sweet contentment of mind, which was like music in his soul, he possessed all. We read a short map or history of his sufferings—**“In prisons more frequent, in deaths oft”** (see II Cor. 11:23-33). Yet behold the blessed frame and temper of his spirit: **“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”**

Which way soever Providence did blow, he had such heavenly skill and dexterity, that he knew how to steer his course. For his outward estate he was indifferent; he could be either on the top of Jacob's ladder or at the bottom; he could sing either the dirge or the anthem; he could be anything that God would have him: **“I know how to want, how to abound”**—here is a rare pattern for us to imitate. Paul, in regard of his faith and courage, was like a cedar, he could not be stirred; but for his outward condition he was like a reed, bending every way with the wind of Providence. When a prosperous gale did blow upon him, he could bend with that—**“I know how to be full”**; and when a boisterous gust of affliction did blow, he could bend in humility with that—**“I know how to be hungry.”** Paul was like a die that has four squares; throw it which way you will, it falls upon a bottom. Let God throw the apostle which way he would, he fell upon this bottom of contentment. A contented spirit is like a watch; though you carry it up and down with you, yet the spring of it is not shaken, nor the wheels out of order, but the watch keeps its perfect motion. So it was with Paul; though God had carried him into various conditions, yet he was not lifted up with the one, nor cast down with the other: the spring of his heart was not broken, the wheels of his affection were not destroyed, but kept their constant motion towards heaven—still contentment. The ship that lies at anchor may sometimes be a little shaken, but never sinks: flesh and blood may have its fears and disquiets, but grace checks them. A Christian having cast anchor in heaven, his heart never sinks; a gracious spirit is a contented spirit.

This is a rare art. Paul did not learn it at the feet of Gamaliel. He says, **“I am instructed”** (Phil. 4:12); I am initiated into this holy mystery; as if he had said, I have gotten the divine art. God must teach us the right art. If we should put some men to an art that they are not skilled in, how unfit would they be for it! Put a husbandman to drawing pictures, what strange work would he make! This is out of his sphere. Take a painter that is exact in laying of colors, and put him to plough, or set him to planting and grafting of trees; this is not his art, he is not skilled in it. Bid a natural man live by faith, and when all things go cross, be contented; you bid him do what he has no skill in; you may as well bid a child guide the stern of a ship. To live contented upon God in the deficiency of outward comforts, is an art which flesh and blood has not revealed; nay, many of God's own children, who excel in some duties of religion, when they come to this of contentment, how do they bungle! They have scarcely commenced masters of this art.

## A Study in Wisdom: Job 1:4 (pt. 2)



*[Here we continue a reprint of a small portion of Joseph Caryl's study in Job. Mr. Caryl wrote twelve volumes on the book of Job. His study is a great example of how deep one can dig into the truths of the Bible.]*

### Job 1:4 (part 2) - Feasting, by Joseph Caryl

**<sup>4</sup>And his sons went and feasted in their homes, everyone his day, and sent and called for their three sisters, to eat and drink with them.**

But because feasting is so often abused and many turn this liberty into wantonness (being then most wicked, when they should be most thankful, and grieving God most, when He gives them means or occasion of rejoicing), I shall therefore briefly discover the abuses of feasting, which will also hint rules for the right ordering of it, that we may eat and drink, and do all so the glory of God.

Feasting is sinful, under the following conditions:

1. When any overcharge their estates; and lavish out what will but serve their necessities or conveniences upon delights and superfluities; to such, feasting is a sin.

2. When the rich feast the rich, and never think upon the poor, as in Luke 14:12-13, "**When you make a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends not thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, not thy rich neighbors.**" Observe here, this is not an absolute denial of calling brethren, and kinsfolk and friends or rich; for brethren men, yea, ought to be called, but says he, when you make a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. That is, when you make a feast, be sure to remember these: do not bid thy brethren, or the rich alone, let the poor have a portion with thee, and be refreshed at or from thy table. When rich feast one another, and let the poor starve or pine, this is very sinful.

3. When there is a studied curiosity and exactness in feasting. When all things that can be thought on must be fetched in, strange meats and foreign sauces, when there is a lusting after quails, when men must have meat for their lusts. Though we may have feasting for our delight, yet we must not have feasting for our lusts; such make their belly their god, as the apostle speaks; when there is so much art used, as destroys the nature of the meat, this is a sin and an error. I remember Bernard speaks of his times, that a man might be at a fish feast, and yet should not know whether he had eaten any fish or not, all things were prepared with so much art, that the very nature of the creature was lost. This is a sinful vanity.

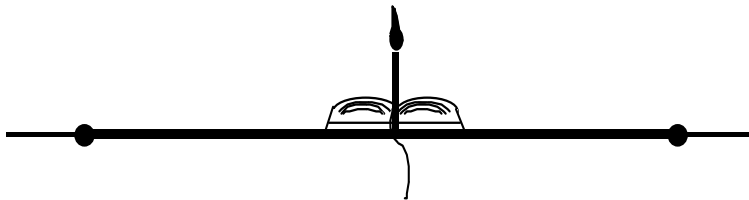
4. When there is intemperance in feasting (whatever the provision be) when there is excess; an overcharging of nature, which is surfeiting and drunkenness. As by the former, man overthrow the nature of meats or drinks. So by this, meat and drink overthrow the nature of man. A man

may feast himself into a beast, and we usually say of such persons, they are disguised. For such feasting the land mourns.

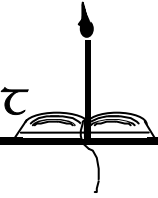
5. When feasting are frequent: Feasts are not for every day, that was the thing taxed in the glutton (see Luke 16), that he fared deliciously every day.

6. When we spend too much of the day at any time, or too much time any day in feasting, when we dine till night and sup all or a great part of the night: this is chambering and wantonness, this is a woeful expense and waste of time; and the expense of time is worse by far than the expense of money; you may regain the expense of your money, but you can never call back the expense of your time; you may be at greater charges in your feasting for the waste of time than for the waste of estate. All the world cannot give you back again the expense of an house. Indeed we often hear men complain they have spent too much money in feasting and entertainments, but it is very rare that any complain they have spent too much time: which is as if a man having received a wound in his body should only be troubled for the hole which the sword made in his doublet. Prodigality of time is the worst and most dangerous prodigality.

7. Feasting is sinful when unseasonable. I speak in regard of occasions and opportunities: there are special times wherein it is unlawful to feast, though we should spend but very little time in feasting, as in Isaiah 22:12-13: **"In that day did the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping and mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth, and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, cutting flesh and drinking wine"** in the next verse it is said, **"And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, surely this impurity shall not be purged from you till you die."** To feast in that day was sinful, and a sin that left such a stain as could not be got out, **"it shall not be purged from you."** What time was this wherein their feasting was so sinful? What made this sin so deep-grained? You shall find a resolution in the beginning of the chapter, **"It was a day of trouble and perplexity and of treading down by the Lord God of hosts in the valley of vision, breaking down the walls and crying to the mountains."** It is a day of trouble and perplexity, and will you now be feasting? Is this a time for you to feast in, when my wrath is breaking forth among you? This feasting with men is a daring of God, ascending defiance into heaven. And such feasting, Amos reproves (6:4-5), **"They did eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the mud of the stall, they chant to the sound of the violin, and invent to themselves instruments of music like David, they drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments, but they are not grieved for the for the affliction of Joseph."**



# A Meditation: The Spiritual Chemist



## A Meditation Upon a Greek Accent by William Spurstowe (ca. 1666)

Accents are by the Hebrews aptly called *Sapores*, or tastes, or savors, because speech or words without the observance of them are like Job's white of an egg, without salt: insipid, and unpleasant. In the Greek, they derive their name from the due tenor, or tuning of words; and in that tongue, words are not pronounced according to the long or short vowels, but according to the accent set upon them, which directs the rise or fall, the length or brevity of their pronunciation. Now, what accents are in the Greek to words, that methinks circumstances are to sins, which, as so many moral accents do fitly serve to show their just and certain dimensions, and teach us aright to discern how great or small they be: and he who is without respect unto them, and judges of the bigness of sins, is likely to err as much as a man that should take upon him, without mathematical instruments, to give exactly the greatness of the heavenly bodies, and to pronounce of altitudes, distances, aspects, and other appearances, by the scantling of the eye. Is not this the Scripture way to set out sin, by the place, time, continuance in it, and repetitions of it? Does not God thus accent Israel's sins by the place in which they were done? They provoked Him at the Red Sea, where they saw the mighty works of His power, in making the deep to be their path to Canaan, and the Egyptian's grave. They tempted Him in the wilderness, where their food, drink, clothes, were all made up of miracles; the clouds yielding them meat, the dry rock yielding water, and their garments not waxing old. Does He not aggravate them, by the long space of their continuance in them, in saying, that they grieved Him forty years? Does He not number the times of their reiterated murmurings and rebellions, and make it as a ground for His justice to destroy them? Necessary therefore it is, that in the duty of self-examination, and reviews of the book of conscience, we do not only read over the naked facts which have been done by us, but that we look into those *apices peccati*, little dots and tittles, which are set upon the heads of many sins (the circumstances, I mean, with which they were committed) or else we shall never read that book aright, or learn to know what sins are great, or what small. The fact and the circumstance are both noted in the journals of conscience, though they be not haply equally legible; and he that is truly penitent will make it a chief part of his work to find out one as well as the other, as being the best means both to get the heart broken for sin, and from sin. What shame? What fear? What carefulness? What revenge will a serious sight of the several aggravations that meet in the perpetration of a sin move and stir up in the heart of a sinner? Will he not say, what a beast am I to sin thus against so clear light, to break so often my own vows, to defer so long my repentance and rising again? What revenge shall I now take of myself to witness my indignation? What carefulness shall I exercise to evidence the truth of my return? What diligence shall I use to redeem my lost time, who have joined the morning of the task, and the evening of the day together? These, and such like thoughts, will sin, when it is read as it is written, and accented, in the conscience produce. But a general knowledge and sight of it, without such particularities, will neither make nor leave any impressions but what are both slight and confused. Therefore, holy God, teach me to understand the errors of my ways aright, and by the light of Thy Spirit make me to see that circumstances in sins are not motes, but beams, and greatly intend their guilt; that so I may mourn for those sins which carnal men conceive to be but so many black nothings; and abhor myself for those corruptions in which they indulge themselves.

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### **Man's Discontentment**

"It is worth a little time and thought to ask why it is that outward things do not bring satisfaction to the human heart. If man were nothing more than the developed 'animal' that he is reckoned popularly to be, he ought to be perfectly happy in a society where good things are available in plenty. A cow in clover is perfectly content. Why then should mankind not be equally content in a world of eating and drinking, playing and dancing? Why, when man has a paradise of sports, fashions and entertainments on his doorstep, is he still worried and unhappy? Why is he puzzled, angry and afraid if he has ready to his hand everything that his eye and his appetite could ask for? Man is a strange being to be sure."

-- Maurice Roberts

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