

Genesis in Biblical Perspective: The Gospel of Christ from Genesis – Guess Who is Coming to Dinner

Genesis 18:1-15

By [Dr. Harry Reeder III](#)

Let's look in Genesis 18. This is the word of God. It's the truth. Genesis 18:1- 15 says

[1] And the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. [2] He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth [3] and said, "O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. [4] Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, [5] while I bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." [6] And Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quick! Three seahs of fine flour! Knead it, and make cakes." [7] And Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to a young man, who prepared it quickly. [8] Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them. And he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

[9] They said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "She is in the tent." [10] The LORD said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. [11] Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. [12] So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?" [13] The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' [14] Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son." [15] But Sarah denied it, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid. He said, "No, but you did laugh."

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of our God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may this, His Word, be preached for you.

Jay Kessler, the marvelous Bible teacher – leader, particularly impacting youth for Christ, wrote, “You’re a blessed man at the end of your life if there are eight people who will grab the handle of your casket.” When I first read that, I got to thinking, “What does he mean?” Then of course, being in the pastorate, I’ve been in that situation where people have come to the end of their life that has been self absorbed and we’re having to almost pay people to show up to carry the casket, having no friends.

It’s interesting, a television program that just ended after a lengthy run, actually, I have to confess I never saw it once, but I know people would discuss it at water coolers and it was the television program Friends. I would say its predecessor was the long- lasting program Cheers. The Cheers program kind of caught you because of the theme song which was the idea. It said “Isn’t it wonderful to have a place where everybody knows your name?”

I could say, “How many go for Auburn? How many are for Alabama? How many are for Samford? I can’t name all 385 colleges. How many are Republicans? Democrats?” It would be hard for me to get everybody’s hand up at one time unless I said, “Who wants to be treated with respect?” I think every hand would go up. Who in the days of difficulty, would like to have a friend they could depend on? I don’t know of anybody that doesn’t need a friend. In my days it was popularized in a song: “Help! I need somebody. Not just anybody. You know I need someone. Help! I need somebody.”

I saw an interesting cartoon. It was a series of slides. The first slide, a guy comes in and he comes up to this woman and he holds open a bag. He puts a gun in her face and he says, “Put all your valuables in this bag.” You go to the next slide, and the woman is stuffing people in the bag. In the next slide, “What are you doing?” She said, “You told me to put my valuables in there. Here are my friends.” There is nothing much more valuable than friends. I’ve got four guys I been meeting with for 18 years. They are my band of brothers, my accountability group. I’ve been through challenges in my personal life, my family life, my ministry life. I thank God they’ve been there these last 18 years, my friends.

While I’d like to speak to this, I’d really like to go to something much more foundational and important, and that’s this. Are you a friend of God and is God your friend? I’ve got a great Gospel blessing, a truth that transforms, a Gospel truth that will transform your life from this text, that’s lived out in this text for you, and that’s this. The truth that transforms is that God intentionally becomes the friend. He makes friends those whom He saves. God intentionally makes friends with those He saves. In other words, those whom The Lord saves by His grace are His friends. In other words, while we were helpless, while we were ungodly, while we were sinners while we were enemies, He saved us by grace and intentionally makes us His friends. The transcendent, thrice holy, almighty, majestic God of all, is my friend in Jesus Christ.

I want to open up these 15 verses for you in this text. How old is Abraham right now? Back in Genesis Chapter 17 it says he is 99 years old. How old is Sarah? She is 90 years old. Then what has happened? God has said, "I'm going to give you land" and we've seen what that means, ultimately, in Christ. "I'm going to give you a seed" and we've seen what that means, ultimately, in Christ. God says, "I am going to give you land. I'm going to give you seed. By the way, I'm going to give you a son." He has made these promises. In fact, He has changed their name and no longer is Abram, Abram, but now he is Abraham. No longer is Sarai, Sarai, she is now Sarah. The father of a multitude, the mother of a multitude, even nations and kings are going to come from them.

After that divine encounter of establishing that covenant it's just one day. I don't know what day it is, it's just a day. I know its noon or more precisely, in the Middle East this would have been about one o'clock our time. The sun is up. They've done their morning work, and now under the oaks of Mamre, these large oak trees, its siesta time. They've had their meal, and in fact Abraham's eyes have closed and he's taking his power nap, getting ready for the afternoon chores. Something stirs him. Have you ever been kind of almost dozing, napping, and then you feel like somebody's there looking at you? He opens his eyes, and there are three men in front of him.

Now let me jump way ahead to Genesis 18 and 19. We know from there that these three men are two angels and a Theophany or a Christophany. The lead speaker in this is Jesus Himself. This is a pre-incarnate ministry of Christ, with two angels. We won't take the time to look through all the verses, but there are seven verses in Genesis 18 and 19 that affirm that this is the Lord Himself, the Second Person of the Trinity, a pre-incarnate ministry of Christ. We find out in Genesis 19 that the other two men are not actually men, but angels appearing as men. As far as Abraham knows, it's three men standing in front of him.

What does he do? He sees them at some distance, because it says he runs out to them and he bows. Then he entreats, "Come under the tree. Let me get some water, and your feet need to be washed. You've been traveling. You need to be refreshed." Notice his language. "Let me get a morsel of bread." They agree. They sit down under the trees and then Abraham quickly goes and finds his wife Sarah and says, "Quick, let's make some bread." It's not just a morsel, but he gets 20 quarts of flour (3 seahs of flour) and he begins to make these little, thin cakes. It's what we would've called, in my day, growing up, hoecakes. They start making these small little pita-like bread that she's now frying up. Then Abraham quickly goes out to the herd, and he takes the fatted calf, brings it back, turns it over to one of his young men, says, "Quickly, get it ready. Get it ready quickly." So they get it ready, sit down, and they start feeding them. They start to eat, drink, be refreshed, and begin to feast on everything that's there.

All of a sudden the one we know is Jesus speaks up to Abraham, who is now standing where the waiter, the servant, would stand, over to the side ready to respond. He looks and says, "Where is Sarah?" Well, Middle East, Sarah would not be there with the men. She is back over in the tent. Sarah is not too far in the tent, Sarah's at the door of the tent listening in. They said, "Where is Sarah?" Now by the way, I don't think Abraham knows that this is the Lord and two angels, because the Bible will later tell us he is entertaining unawares, angels. I do know that right now all bets are off, because the Lord says, "Where is Sarah?", not Sarai. He uses the changed name, which He Himself had just changed. "Where is Sarah?" Now we find out why the Lord's there. "Tell her that in a year, this promise of a seed" – let's be specific, "In a year I'll be back, and she'll have a son."

Sarah's at the door listening, and she says, "A son? Shall I beyond the age, and Abraham worn out, have pleasure?" And she starts laughing. The Lord says, "Sarah, did you laugh? Why did you laugh? Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Of course, immediately all kind of verses jump to your mind, don't they? Without him I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. No, nothing's too hard. It's a rhetorical question. Is anything too hard? Who is making this promise? It is the Lord. Is anything too hard for the Lord? "Sarah, did you laugh?" "No, I didn't laugh." "Yes you did."

I want to give you three life lessons out of this text that's giving us this wonderful Gospel truth. The enemies of God that He saves by grace, God makes intentionally His friends. The first thing from the text is notice this display of the intimacy of friendship. It's very interesting that in the Bible, Abraham is called something. Abraham is called three times in the Bible the friend of God. Let me show you in the New Testament where it says that. Look at James 2. James is an interesting writer, because James is acknowledging that we're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, but James has taken it upon himself, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to tell us that faith is never alone. If there is faith, there will be obedience. In other words, there will be works. It's not that you're saved by your works, and you're not saved by faith and works. He is telling you that saving faith works. He uses Abraham as an example of this.

James 2:23 says [23] and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. Where else does it say this in the Bible? It is in Genesis 17 and Genesis 15:6. "Abraham believed the Lord, and it was credited to him as righteousness." In Genesis 18, we can see that Abraham and God are friends, but where does it say he's the friend of God? It is found in two places in the Old Testament. Look at 2 Chronicles 20. Israel is under attack by the Ammonites and the Moabites. As the Ammonites and the Moabites are attacking, the Lord is encouraging them that He will keep them. He is telling them, "Look, the same people attacking you are the people that I drove out of here to give this land to your father Abraham, when I promised it to him."

2 Chronicles 20:7 says [7] Did you not, our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? If God gave the land to Abraham your friend, will He not take care of the descendants of His friend Abraham? But when you look further in the Bible you find out that the descendants of Abraham are not the circumcised in the flesh, they are the circumcised in the heart. The children of Abraham are not lined up physically, but the children of Abraham come from Jew and Gentile and all who believe are the children of Abraham. They will have One who will redeem them, who is the fulfillment of the land and the fulfillment of all the promises, and that's Jesus Christ.

The prophecies of this Christ occur all over the book of Isaiah. I want to show you one place. Again, Abraham is called the friend of God. Isaiah 41:8-10 says

[8] But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; [9] you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, "You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off"; [10] fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Who is the you He is referring to in these verses? It is those of Jacob and Israel, but not the all y'all simply of a physical line, but spiritual Israel. It is the spiritual sons of Abraham that He has called from every nation and the farthest corners of the earth into the Kingdom of God. Your father is Abraham. I'll take care of you. Don't fear, don't be dismayed. Your father was My friend. He was the friend of God. We see the intimacy of friendship.

Now where does friendship always lead to? It leads to the intimacy of a relationship and that gives us another lesson, the extravagance of hospitality. I want to make sure that I affirm something, and you hear this rightly. There's very few times when a pastor preaches on something that he stands in awe, and as the benefactor of the people he's preaching to, on what he's preaching. Most of the time God lays it on your heart as a preacher to challenge and challenge, and I do want to challenge you, but I have never been in the midst of people – individual situations yes, but never a church have I ever seen as committed to hospitality as this congregation. I'm not just saying that I'm acknowledging it.

I have the opportunity to sit down with these pastors that come here a couple of times a year – the Embers to a Flame conference – who are hurting, hurting, hurting and I see them by the end of their four or five days here in your homes, and what they come and tell me you've done for them. I get letters for them of what you continue to do and uphold them. I get the privilege to sit down in a devotional with the missionaries in our past missionaries conference, in which after I teach I say, "Are there any questions?" They raise their hand and say, "No,

I don't have a question, preacher. I just want to tell you this. This congregation has blessed us" and all the missionaries stood up and started applauding. I praise the Lord for you, but let me tell you, that doesn't just happen. That happens as people absorb a value of virtue.

When we talk about hospitality, and even though I want to affirm its presence, I want us to realize something. We are in a culture that is constantly battling you to take you away from hospitality. What is hospitality? I've chosen my words carefully here. It is the free use of one's God-given resources for the wellbeing of others. It is the free, not begrudging, not minimized, it is the free use of one's God-given resources to nurture and encourage the wellbeing of others in your life. What does the culture tell you what about your resources? We live in a society where we gather our resources in this cultural drive of conspicuous consumerism. What are my resources? They are my home, my car or cars, my communication systems, my telephones, and all of this stuff is conspicuous consumerism.

We get our resources to make a statement about how important we are. See my house? See my yard? See my car? See the labels on my things? That's where the culture is driving resources. So I would be remiss if I didn't affirm what's there and challenge us forward, because the cultures keep trying to tell you, "Oh, no, your home is your castle, not a hospital" – hospitality – "it's a castle." Go home, fill the moat, put in the alligators, and frown at anybody that looks like they're going to walk up the sidewalk.

I got so convicted when I heard a testimony from Miss Dixie at one thanksgiving service. She said, "Oh, I just want to thank the Lord for the telephone salespeople." "Oh, man," I said, "Dixie, don't do that. I am under such conviction right now." She said, "Oh, isn't it wonderful that God has people to call me, that I can share Jesus with?"

Now, let me tell you the good thing about that for those who were under conviction like me. She says, "Now, I won't let you talk to me about your product unless you let me talk to you about Jesus" and some do that. It's amazing! How do you see the people around you – neighbors, friends all around – and how do we see our stuff? Is our stuff there for the free use of the wellbeing of others, in which we personally engage excitedly?

I've chosen the word extravagance for a reason. Abraham is here entertaining three guys, and as he's entertaining these three guys he says to them, "Can I get you a little water, and by the way, a little morsel of bread?" "OK" and they sit down at the oaks of Mamre. Where do they eat their meal? They eat it under the oaks of Mamre. In other words, Abraham is extending hospitality and he's the benefactor of it. Mamre was one of the three men that went and helped him get Lot back. In other words, he's on borrowed land. Now, it's going to be his land because God will give him that land, but right now it belongs to Mamre. Mamre is letting him pitch his tents there. Now this resource that's come to him by the hand

of God through Mamre, he now makes available when he says, "Come here and sit down." They sit down, and the morsel of bread and little bit of water becomes a fatted calf. It becomes a meal. It is not a morsel of bread but it becomes a banquet.

This is a man that has his own army, remember? He doesn't assign hospitality to someone. He says, "Come here." Notice what happens. When he sees the people, it says, he ran to them. He bowed to them. He entreated them. He didn't assign all this to some underling. He did it and then when they said "yes," who went into the kitchen? Abraham. Who cooked the bread? Sarah. Who went and cut out the calf, out of the herd? Abraham. I'm sure he had a lot of young people that could have taken care of that like servants, but he did it. Then he brought it back and turned it over to a man to cook it but, notice the language. Three times it says he went quickly. To Sarah he says "quickly let's fix the food." "Quickly" he says to the man, "prepare the calf. We're going to have some Texas barbeque for these people." Now the morsel of bread has become an extravagant banquet. We see the free use – the personal involvement – of hospitality as he engages in this extravagant display. He brings freely his best and he personally engages in it.

Another life lesson is the laughter of unbelief. In the midst of all of this, when they tell Abraham, "Where is Sarah?" and the Lord says, "tell her, when I get back here in a year she'll have a son." Don't you love the honesty of Scripture here? It says Sarah started laughing. I mean, you can just see her laughing. It is the laughter of unbelief. "A son? OK. Me? I'm beyond the age. Abraham? He is worn out." That's a great evaluation from your wife, "and you're telling me we're going to have the pleasure of intimacy that's going to result in a child? Ha ha ha." But while it's amusing, unbelief is not laughing matter. As I was walking through this, I got to thinking about the times that I and unbelief laughed off Christian stewardship by saying, "God, there ain't no way 90% is more than 100%." I laughed off the Lord's day by saying, "Lord, there ain't no way six days are more than seven and I'll ride the heights like the wings of an eagle if I call your day a day of delight. Lord, there ain't no way you're going to be great if you're the least. There ain't no way you're going to be first if you're the last. There ain't no way you're going to be a leader if you're a servant."

Unbelief is no laughing matter. In fact, I've noticed three things here in this text. Number one is unbelief is a sin. Whatever is not of faith is a sin. The second thing is sin always leads to more sin. She laughed at the Lord and His promises. That was the sin of unbelief. Then what happens? "Did you laugh?" She said, "No." That's a lie. Sin leads to sin. God never lets sin alone. This Jesus who made the promise that she laughed at in sin then lied in sin, is the Jesus that'll go to the cross to pay for that and all of her sins. Never use the phrase, "It's easier to get forgiveness than permission." Forgiveness is not easy. It took the cross, and the Son of God. Never use the phrase, "Well, I guess God just forgives." No, God doesn't just forgive, God forgives justly. Payments have to be made and even

though He forgives us of our sin, He will lovingly confront us in our sin. “No, Sarah.” I love the next word. “No, but you did laugh.” He confronts the sin.

Here are the takeaways. Number one is you never know who is going to show up in your life. Let’s look at Hebrews 13. You never know who is going to show up in your life. Hebrews 13:1-2 says [1] Let brotherly love continue. [2] Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Who is that obviously that referring to? That’s referring to Abraham. Three guys show up and he gives them hospitality. Guess who he’s entertaining? He is entertaining two angels and the Lord.

I’m going to give you three sentences. The first one is, you could someday entertain an angel when you open up the resources of your life. It may be that person you picked up in trouble on the side of the road. It may be that person that talked to you, that you sat down. That could be the person or I actually do believe in angelic presence, and I’m going to give you three examples in the series on spiritual warfare in my own personal life. So you may entertain angels.

Here is the second sentence. We don’t have to worry about whether we would actually be hosting Jesus himself, because Jesus went to the cross, rose again, ascended into heaven at the right hand of the Father, right? He will be there until He comes again. OK, Harry, so I might in hospitality befriend an Angel, but I won’t befriend Jesus. Oh, yes! Jesus gives us a glimpse of the last day as we stand before the judgment seat. It’s in Matthew 25:31-46 and He says, “On that day I will say to the righteous, those who have been clothed in my perfect righteousness, when I was hungry you fed Me. When I was thirsty, you gave Me something to drink. When I was in prison, you visited Me. When I was lonely, you came to Me. When I was naked, you clothed Me.” Then we will say to Him in that day, “Now Lord, when were You hungry and I fed You? When were You thirsty and I gave You something to drink? When were You in prison and I visited You?” He will say to me, “When you did it to the least of these, my brethren, you did it to Me.”

Who will be that person in your home, your dorm, your apartment, your office cubicle that you bring in with the free use of resource and you begin to draw them to Christ and Christ says “now you’re doing it to Me”? It could be that prison visit that you make. It could be that open door when you have the hot dog supper and invite the people in from the neighborhood to sit down, talk with them and just fellowship with them. In fact, we entertain the Lord when we reach out in the name of the Lord. People’s homes have become dark rooms. With the freedom of extravagant hospitality, the dark room can become a lighthouse of the Gospel where we entertain Christ and people meet Christ, right within our homes. I must say if that’s true of our houses, must it not be true of this, the house of God? That we’re not just getting out of our car and worrying about our parking place and making sure no visitor had the audacity to sit in my pew, but when we get out and

we notice that person who seems to be wandering and we're not sure, is that a member or is that somebody that's a visitor.

What would Abraham have done? He would have ran up to them. He would have bowed. I'll free you of that but at least put your hand out. He would have greeted them. "Here, come take my pew. I didn't pay for it, by the way, but it's still my pew. Here, take my pew. Would you come with me to the Sunday school class? By the way, what are you doing after the service today? Hey, we'll throw another 'tater in the pot. Come on over." It is amazing what that moment will do and the very testimony of Christ. It will stand countercultural, but oh, as the culture goes in a death spiral on things like this isn't it wonderful to show the extravagance of Grace in the lives of God's people?

The second takeaway is that here's a divine profile of friendship. When you see God befriending someone, take notice, because here we can learn how to be a friend. What does a friend do? A friend initiates. How does this text start off? He appeared. Secondly, not only does a friend initiate but a friend will celebrate. They sit at a banquet together. What else does a friend do? A friend will comfort. What else does a friend do? A friend will confront. How many of you all know who Brother Bryan is? He was a great saint of God. Much of what's being done for the Lord in our city today still goes back to the turn of the century and his life and ministry. I wrote down something he said from the book Religion in Shoes. He says, "Friends are those who help us even if it hurts us." A friend will confront as well as comfort. Faithful are the wounds of a friend. "No, Sarah. You did laugh." Faithful are the wounds of a friend.

Here is this beautiful friendship that takes place and then finally, Jesus, what a friend for sinners. Jesus is lover of my soul. Jesus, what a friend we have in Jesus. Let's close by looking at John 15. I know when I'm able to say to you, "I marvel at your hospitality. Let's take it to another level. I marvel at your friendship extended" I know that didn't just happen at Briarwood. That's leadership. In September of 1999 I stood right here with Dr. Frank Barker and we had a Passing of the Mantle service. Then we had another service not long after that, I think it was in October, to honor Frank and Barbara's ministry. The place was full that Sunday night and on that night one of the elders who was guiding us through the service said, "How many of you here have experienced the hospitality of Frank and Barbara Barker?" Do you remember the overwhelming majority? I know hospitality's here because it's been exemplified and modeled.

I know Christians here are taking it to another level and they refuse to be self-absorbed in this self-absorbed culture. They say, "This isn't my church or my pew or my moment. This is Christ's church and it's a hospital and we'll reach out." By the way, there's an emergency room at Briarwood, in the Kingdom of God and it's my house. We'll take people in and begin to minister to them. I also know that hospitality and friendship among God's people comes because they know what a friend they have in Jesus. Jesus says in John 15:12-15,

[12] "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. [13] Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. [14] You are my friends if you do what I command you. [15] No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

A friend, your Savior, intentionally made you His friend, by going to the cross and redeeming you. His enemies have become His friends. He says, "I know you want to serve Me, but I don't call you servants. You can call yourself a servant, I call you My friend and I will celebrate with you. I will confront you and I will confide in you. In fact, I'll give you everything you need to know about Me. I'll make it all known to you right here. Now My friends show themselves. They obey Me but it's not their obedience that makes them My friends. It's their obedience that shows they're My friends. My friends do what I command."

What a friend we have in Jesus. A man lays down his life for his friends. Jesus laid down his life for you. I love friendship. Fifteen or sixteen years ago, I'm sitting at my desk. A phone call comes in and I pick it up, "Hello?" "Harry?" "Yes." "Hi. It's Coach." He's a PCA pastor, but we call him "coach." The reason why is because he coached Archie Manning in high school, and if you're with him three minutes he'll let you know he coached Archie Manning in high school. I said, "Hey, Coach! What's going on?" He said, "I just got back from a funeral." I figured it out. It was Michael Sartell, a wonderful PCA pastor that early on went to be with the Lord. He said, "Yeah, I was at Michael's funeral. Michael meant so much to me. I stood beside his grave and thought of all the things I should have told him. He's my friend and now I can't until I see him in heaven. It was at that moment I made a vow. I'm not going to stand beside another friend's grave without telling them what I think about them and how much I appreciate them."

He went on to say, "I made a list of five and you were number three. I want to tell you some things." Now, of course, my next question was, "Are you aware of some date I have that I'm not aware of?" He said, "No, I want you to know what you mean to me." I learned a lesson about friendship. Friends keep short lists. They confide, they confront, and they celebrate. Oh, I praise the Lord that with no gun pointed to His head Jesus freely went to a cross. He opened up eternity. He purchased me and said, "You are valuable. You're my friend. When I go away to prepare a place for you, wait until that hospitality center gets opened, and I'll open it up for all My friends." Is Jesus your friend? What a friend for sinners. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You so much for the time we could be Your Word. Thank You for the opportunity to worship, to celebrate in Him and to know that we have a

Redeemer who has taken His enemies, made them His friends, and we the children of Abraham have been called the friends of God by the very words of Jesus who laid His life down for us. If there is anyone here, Father, who has not yet received Jesus as Lord and Savior, may the call of intimacy be heard by them and may they come. Oh, just as I am, come and we Your friends will love to obey all Your command, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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