

# Where -

## Did Christ Go After His Ascension?

A Study to Determine Where Christ Entered  
the Most Holy Place in the Heavenly Sanctuary--  
Whether at His Ascension or Some 1,813 Years  
Later.

# **Where Did Christ Go After His Ascension?**

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## WHERE DID CHRIST GO AFTER HIS ASCENSION?

A study to determine when Christ entered the most holy place in the heavenly sanctuary, whether: at His ascension or some 1,813 years later.

There are two contradictory teachings regarding where Christ went immediately after His ascension. It goes without saying that both positions cannot be correct. One supports the idea that following His ascension Christ went to the first apartment, or holy place, of the heavenly sanctuary (providing there is more than one apartment there) to reside, and that God, the Father, at that time moved with His throne from the second apartment, or most holy place, out into the first apartment to be there with Christ until 1844. At this time, according to this position, God, with Christ, moved back into the second apartment where Christ began an investigative judgment.

The other position is that Christ ascended immediately to the presence and right hand of His Father in the most holy place in heaven, and that the idea of an investigative judgment is spurious.

In other words, in this study we will be concerned with these two questions: (1) Did God come out (of an inner, or most holy place) to meet Christ at His ascension and live with Him there (in an outer apartment, or holy place) for some 1,813 years? or (2) did Christ go immediately to the right hand of His Father in the holiest place

there to become man's advocate and intercessor?

Which teaching shall we accept, and does it make any difference? The teaching to be accepted is, of course, the one which can be sustained by Holy Writ, and having the correct knowledge of this matter is important, because without it one cannot understand or appreciate the mediatorial work of Christ.

In addressing these lines to our friends who differ with our position, we appeal to the mind rather than to the emotions.

Cherished doctrines and long-standing beliefs are not easily relinquished, we know, and any argument submitted against old teachings is usually looked upon as heresy. We ask the reader, therefore, to regard this writing as both a challenge and an appeal to follow what reason guided by Scripture tells him is right, no matter what his feelings may be. We now proceed to review the conflicting positions suggested in the foregoing statements.

### **A Widely Promulgated Theory**

The following quotations are taken from leading Seventh-day Adventist writers:

"When Christ commenced His ministry above, on the throne of His Father, that throne was in the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary" (Uriah Smith, in *Looking Unto Jesus*, page 134).

On pages 54 and 55 of *Early Writings* is recorded a vision in which Mrs. White states, "I saw a throne, and on it sat the Father and the Son. . . I saw the Father rise up from the throne, and in a flaming chariot

go into the holy of holies within the vail, and sit down. Then Jesus rose up from the throne, and the most of those who were bowed down arose with Him. I did not see one ray of light pass from Jesus to the careless multitude after He arose, and they were left in perfect darkness. Those who arose when Jesus did, kept their eyes fixed on Him as He left the throne and led them out a little way. Then He raised His right arm, and we heard His lovely voice saying, 'Wait here; I am going to My Father to receive the kingdom; keep your garments spotless, and in a little while I will return from the wedding and receive you to Myself.' Then a cloudy chariot, with wheels like flaming fire, surrounded by angels, came to where Jesus was. He stepped into the chariot and was borne to the holiest, where the Father sat."

"This necessitates a removing of God's throne and the ministry of Christ from the first to the second apartment" (*Bible Text Book*, by O. A. Johnson, page 120).

These passages are clearly intended to teach that at the ascension God vacated the most holy part of His sanctuary, removed His throne, and came out to be with Christ in the first apartment. It is then claimed that a further "removing of God's throne" back again to the most holy was necessary in the year 1844 A.D., and that it was there and then that Jesus entered into the holiest. It calls for serious reflection that these supposed movements of God's throne, from one apartment to another and then back again, are an accommodation intended to prove a theory. An appeal to Scripture

should put the issue beyond doubt. The theory necessitating these accommodating moves is that Christ at His ascension entered into only the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary.

As the Scriptures abundantly show that Christ, after His sacrifice, "sat down on the right hand of God," it is necessary, in order to harmonize this fact with the Adventist sanctuary theory, to remove God's throne from the most holy place in heaven into the holy place, or first apartment, for a period of over 1,813 years. The result is that we are asked to accept the following positions:

### **Moving the Throne of God**

1. That the most holy place was vacant for 1,813 years.

2. That for that long period the holy place accommodated God, and the throne of God, so that Christ might be sitting on the right hand of God while still in the first apartment; and

3. That in 1844 God and Christ and the throne and the ministry were all transferred to the most holy place.

Where, in the typical service, do we find this "removing of God's throne" from the most holy into the first apartment and then its removal back to the most holy place? Everyone knows that such movements simply did not take place in the earthly sanctuary. God dwelt in the holiest, and the high priest went in to be with God, "alone, once every year" (Hebrews 9:7).

So Christ also "entered in once into the

holy place"—to the very presence of God typified in the earthly service.

The question as to whether or not God's throne is movable is quite beside the point. The important consideration is, DID GOD thus move His throne at the time of the ascension and again on October 22nd in 1844?

The earthly sanctuary was a place for God to dwell in. "Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them," was the divine commandment. But *the true* dwelling place of God is *heaven itself* (Heb. 9:24). There is a difference between the heavenly and the earthly dwelling place. In the earthly it was necessary to veil off a certain portion in order that the priests might draw near daily to the divine presence without fear of death. The immediate presence of God was therefore confined to a small portion, termed the most holy. God's presence is not so confined in heaven. There is no need for that in the ministry of such a priest as Jesus Christ.

From these facts we must recognize that in the earthly sanctuary there were degrees of holiness, indicated by an intervening veil; but it would not be correct to assume from this that in heaven it is necessary to so divide God's dwelling place into a holy and a most holy portion. In heaven, the approach to God is "through the veil, that is to say, his [Christ's] flesh" (Heb. 10:20).

If we accept the position that Christ at His ascension entered into only a first apartment of heaven, it becomes necessary to bring God out of the most holy place into



the first apartment *to be with Christ*. And here, according to the teaching, God was with Christ for 1,813 years. Then in 1844 the Father returned to the most holy, whither Christ followed. This theory, therefore, indisputably attempts to prove that **GOD CAME OUT TO BE WITH CHRIST**. Let us now look at the second proposition: **THAT CHRIST WENT IN TO BE WITH GOD**.

Mrs. E. G. White says, "And what was done in type in the ministration of the earthly sanctuary, is done in reality in the ministry of the heavenly sanctuary" (*Great Controversy*, edition of 1911, p. 420).

Nowhere in Scripture are we taught that God's throne or His immediate presence dwelt in the first apartment of the earthly sanctuary, or that He at any time vacated the most holy to be with the high priest in the first apartment. Therefore, if "in reality in the ministration of the heavenly sanctuary" God vacated the most holy in order to be with Christ in the first apartment, it was accomplished **CONTRARY TO TYPE**.

Is not the knowledge of this blunder alone sufficient to shake the faith of all in the accepted Seventh-day Adventist interpretation? Can the reader accept the teaching that "what was done in type in the ministration of the earthly sanctuary is done in reality in the ministration of the heavenly sanctuary" and at the same time accept also that God vacated the most holy in heaven and came out to be with Christ, a supposition directly contrary to the type?

Would it not be more harmonious for

those who insist on type meeting antitype to recognize that the heaven of God's immediate presence IS itself the most holy place?

To emphasize "what was done in type" calls for equal emphasis upon what was NOT done in type. In the type God did not come out to be with Christ in the first apartment in heaven.

#### **"Heaven Is God's Throne"**

Christ, Himself, has spoken on this important subject. He identifies heaven with the throne of God. "Swear not at all"; He commands, "neither by heaven; for it is God's throne."

The epistle to the Hebrews harmonizes, as all Scripture does, with the teaching of Christ. Where did Christ enter, "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever"? Paul tells us that it was "into heaven itself." Christ "sat down on the right hand of God" (Heb. 10:12; 9:24). Is not this sufficient? Is it not sufficient to know that Jesus entered into heaven itself to be with God as our Mediator? Is it necessary to remove God from one apartment to another, as it is taught, just to prove that Christ only entered a first apartment at His ascension? The Scriptures do not sanction such tamperings with God's throne, but instead make it definitely clear that, at the time of His ascension,

#### **Christ Went In to Be With God.**

"Who . . . when he [Christ] had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3).

"Christ...by his own blood...entered in once into the holy place..." (Chap. 9:12). It is one of the great facts of the gospel that Christ, after His death and resurrection, ascended to heaven and took His place at the Father's right hand. That place, in the immediate unveiled presence of almighty God is plainly taught in the Scriptures to be the highest and holiest in all the universe. A scheme of prophetic interpretation which teaches that Christ did not enter upon His ministry in the Holy of Holies until 1844 is out of harmony with this important fact.

When Jesus Christ went in "to appear before the face of God for us," had He reached the place of ultimate holiness? or had He not? To teach that Christ did not take up His ministry in the Holy of Holies until 1844 obscures or minimizes the fact that He had unrestrained access to the presence of the Father from the time of His ascension.

If there is one teaching about which the Bible is clear, it is the teaching that at His ascension He went directly to the presence of God. Note how clearly this is brought out in the following verses:

"But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55).

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8:34).

"Which he wrought in Christ, when he

raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:20).

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1).

"But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Heb. 10:12).

"Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him" (1 Peter 3:22).

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and *am set down with my Father in his throne*" (words italicized for emphasis) (Rev. 3:21).

In each of the above statements, all of which were recorded under the direction of the Holy Spirit, we notice the fact that they were written in the past tense. These writers were not trying to convey to us that at some far-off distant date Christ would approach the throne of the Father. To the contrary, they convey to us the fact that at the time they were writing that Christ was *already* in the immediate presence of God, there to plead the merits of that sacrifice in their behalf. Their faith and hope rested upon the finished work of the Cross.

That this is the most highly exalted place in the universe, the place of the greatest power and influence, is stated over and over again. The place of the immediate presence of God must also be, beyond question, the place of the greatest holiness. We cannot

conceive of any place more holy than that of the immediate presence of God.

The Scriptural record clearly shows that the supreme holiness of the inner portion of the earthly sanctuary was due to the personal presence of God. "... for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat" was the reason urged upon Aaron and his sons for not coming at all times into the most holy place. (See Lev. 16:1, 2.)

"... there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat" (Ex. 25:22)

In the epistle to the Hebrews that which is spoken of in one place as the "sanctuary ... which the Lord pitched" is elsewhere described as "heaven itself" (see Heb. 8:2 and Heb. 9:24). There is, of course, no reason why the two terms: "heavenly sanctuary" and "heaven itself" might not be applied to one and the same place. The tabernacle which the Lord pitched must be inconceivably greater than that pitched by man; and while we may think of it as being in heaven, we are bound also to regard it as being, in itself, the heaven of heavens. The place where God dwells must be the highest and holiest of heaven.

That the apostle is thinking of the heavenly sanctuary when he speaks of "heaven itself" is evident from the fact that he uses the term in making a direct comparison with the earthly sanctuary: "For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us" (Heb. 9:24, R.V.). And we are assured in the epistle to the Ephe-

sians that this "heaven itself" is "far above all heavens" (see Eph. 4:10 and also 1:20, 21). This seems to be in direct conflict with the idea of a still holier place to which Christ could go some 1,813 years later.

We have sometimes reasoned that as God's throne is represented in the Scriptures as a living, moving thing, it is not to be thought of as being confined to the inner apartment of the sanctuary. At times the Lord met with both Moses and the children of Israel at the door of the tabernacle. This, however, does not by any means free our accepted teaching from the difficulties and objections referred to above. Whatever exceptions there may be, it cannot be denied that in the days of the earthly tabernacle the most holy place was regarded as the place of God's presence, and that the whole sanctuary service centered there. The occasions when the holy Shekinah was manifested elsewhere were the exceptions and not the rule. If in the antitype the presence of God was manifested continually in the first apartment of the sanctuary for a period of 1,813 years, then what was a rare exception in the type became the rule in the antitype. Not only is such a position unscriptural, it is likewise opposed to the direct statement of Mrs. White: "And what was done in type in the ministration of the earthly sanctuary, is done in reality in the ministry of the heavenly sanctuary" (*Great Controversy*, p. 420, ed. 1911).

In the earthly sanctuary the presence of God was always represented to be in the Most Holy place of the tabernacle. Whether we call it the holy place, the most holy, or

the holiest, it matters little. Christ entered into the very presence of God—to His throne—at His ascension. There is no teaching more plainly stated than that grand truth.

The writers of that portion of the Bible from Matthew through Revelation do not definitely designate one apartment in distinction from another. It is, nevertheless, quite clear that where it is stated that Christ went to "the holy place," the immediate presence of God is intended, which in type corresponded to the most holy place. To this location Christ went in to be with God. This fact is disputed by the Adventist teaching. The position is maintained that God came out of the most holy to be with Christ in the first apartment, and therefore the expression "holy place" in the epistle to the Hebrews must always signify the first apartment.

That the reference in Hebrews 9:12 to "the holy place" could mean the equivalent of the second apartment of the earthly sanctuary, or the most holy, is well illustrated by similar references by leading Seventh-day Adventist writers. Of the two following quotations the first is from the pen of Mrs. E. G. White, and the second from the pen of her husband, James White, when he was editor of *The Present Truth*.

"The slumbering church must be aroused, awakened out of its spiritual lethargy, to a realization of the important duties which have been left undone. The people have not entered into **the holy place, where Jesus has gone** to make an atonement for His children" (Mrs. E. G. White, in *The Review and Herald*, Feb. 25, 1890; quoted by

A. G. Daniels in *Christ Our Righteousness*, page 118).

"But the sinner, to whom Jesus stretched out His arms all the day long, and who had rejected the offers of salvation, was left without an advocate, when Jesus passed into the Holy Place, and shut that door in 1844" (Editorial on "The Sanctuary, 2300 days, and The Shut Door," in *The Present Truth* for May, 1850).

It cannot be denied that both these writers, while using the expression "holy place," refer specifically to what they would call the second apartment in heaven, or the most holy place. If, however, it is consistent for Adventist writers to thus call the second apartment the holy place, without having to use the superlative degree in order to avoid being misunderstood, it cannot be consistently denied that Paul might speak of "the holy place" and mean exactly the same location.

### **The "Vail" or "Veil"**

The word *vail* (or *veil*, as it is also spelled) referring to the temple is found six times in the writings of the apostles of the Christian era. In Matthew 27:51, Mark 15:38, and Luke 23:45 we find the account of the rending of the veil at the death of Christ. That the veil in these gospels refers to the curtain between the first and second apartments no loyal Seventh-day Adventist will deny, for Mrs. White teaches that it refers to the curtain between the two apartments. Notice how clearly this is brought out in the following:

"With a rending noise the inner veil



of the temple is torn from top to bottom by an unseen hand, throwing open to the gaze of the multitude a place once filled with the presence of God. In this place the Shekinah had dwelt. Here God had manifested His glory above the mercy-seat ... The most holy place of the earthly sanctuary is no longer saved." *Desire of Ages*, page 909, 1898 ed.

These citations show that Mrs. White taught that when the term "*the veil*" was used by these writers it meant the curtain between the two apartments. And let no one try to dodge the force of this fact by affirming that the temple in the time of Christ had but one curtain, for Mrs. White, at least twice, speaks of the curtain that was rent at the time of Christ as "the inner veil." (See *Desire of Ages*, pages 184 and 909.)

The other three references to "the veil" are found in the writings of the apostle to the Hebrews. We now come to the climax of the controversy: What does "within the veil" mean in Hebrews 6:19, 20? It reads:

"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

In every other place where the phrase, "within the veil," is used in the entire Bible, it always, without exception, refers to the most holy place. Wherever the word "*vail*" or "*veil*" is found in the entire Bible and used in connection with the sacrificial services, it also means the curtain between the

first and second apartments, unless it is this one in Hebrews 6:19. Mrs. White, herself, defines "the veil," when used without qualification, as the curtain dividing the two apartments.

Commenting on Hebrews 6:19, Moses Stuart, the great scholar and authority on both the Hebrew and Greek languages, has this to say:

"And which enters into that within the veil, i.e., which hope enters into the inner sanctuary, the sanctum sanctorum where God dwells. The meaning, as I explain the passage, is, that the objects of hope are in heaven where God dwells" (*Stuart's Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, page 363).

In his book, *Hebrews Verse by Verse*, William R. Newall comments thus: "Notice that 'within the veil' indicates Heaven itself, the very presence of God" (page 207).

*The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, by James Strong, has this to say on the meaning of the word "veil" in Heb. 6:19: "the door screen (to the Most Holy Place) in the Jewish Temple:—vail."

In their *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown add this thought to their comments on the verse under study: "veil—Greek, catapetasma; the second veil which shut in the Holiest place. The outer veil was called by a distinct Greek term, calumma."

With all this array of evidence what authority has anyone to teach that "within the veil," in Heb. 6:19, refers to the first apartment? There is not a teaching in all

the religious world so hopelessly without Bible foundation as the teaching that "within the veil" means in the first apartment.

### **Its True Meaning**

Since "within the veil" means in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary, then Christ was in the most holy place when Paul wrote the letter to the Hebrews. And since Christ was in the most holy place in the days of Paul, then He did not move from the holy to the most holy on October 22nd, 1844.

The idea that Christ waited until 1844 to go into the presence of the Father is not only an error but it is contrary to the united teachings of the Scriptures. Whenever the position of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary is mentioned, He is always placed in the holy of holies. Mark says: "... he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God" (chap. 16:19). Peter places Him "by the right hand of God exalted" (Acts 2:23 and 1 Peter 3:22). Stephen saw Him "standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55). Paul, no less than seven times, recognized Christ at "the right hand of God" (see Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; and 12:2).

We turn again to the ninth chapter of Hebrews. A careful reading of this chapter should be sufficient for anyone who can understand to see that Paul is referring to the most holy place in several instances where he speaks of it as the holy place. See this in verses 8 and 24 of the R.V. as well as in verses 12 and 25 in both versions. The reader is asked to notice the following

parallel, which constitutes an important feature of the apostle's argument:

In verse 7 it is clearly stated that the earthly high priest went into the second apartment once every year. Why was it necessary for him to go in every year? Verse 8 tells us that it was because "the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest." Notice that while it was necessary for the Aaronic priests to enter once every year, Christ is said to have entered immediately, once for all. What the Aaronic priests did often, Christ did once.

The argument is not that the priests of the Aaronic order entered once every year into the first apartment but into the second. The parallel is that Christ entered once for all, and it would be absurd to turn the apostle's reasoning to refer to Christ's entrance into a first apartment, as it is attempted.

#### **The Aaronic Order**

But into the second went the high priest alone once every year... (Heb. 9:7).

#### **The Melchisedec Order**

... Through his own blood, [Christ] entered in once for all into the holy place... (Heb. 9:12, R.V.).

As with the Aaronic order, so with the order of Melchisedec; except that whereas the Aaronic priests entered the second apartment continually, or once a year, Christ entered the second once only.

Furthermore, Paul shows clearly that it was necessary that the yearly entry of the Aaronic priests should continue until Christ had made open the way into the holiest in heaven. Had Christ not entered the most holy in heaven at the time of His ascension, then it would be necessary for the earthly high priests to have continued their yearly entry until "the way into the holiest of all" (i. e. "heaven itself") was "made manifest"; which, according to theory was in 1844 A.D. But Paul assures us that Christ had already entered that *holy place* in his day, so that the yearly or continual entry of the typical service was no longer necessary, and that doubtless was the reason why in the providence of God the earthly temple was destroyed not many years afterward.

#### Within the Veil

In Hebrews 6:19, 20 we have a sure guide as to what Paul understood in this matter: "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

Our hope is WITHIN THE VEIL. According to Exodus 26:33. "within the veil" was the portion where the ark of the testimony rested. "...the vail shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy."

Jesus, according to Paul, had not entered the first apartment only, as our forerunner, but "within the veil," "into the holiest," into "heaven itself." The word "*forerunner*"

is very significant, and proves beyond doubt that Paul understood Christ had already reached the presence of the Father, or the equivalent of the second apartment of the typical sanctuary. If we refer to Heb. 9:7 we find that the Aaronic high priest entered the most holy alone. He entered as a representative only of those who were outside. No one could follow him; he went ALONE.

Christ entered the corresponding holy place in heaven (call it what you may) as our FORERUNNER. The significance of this, says a certain commentator, is the suggestion that the way was open for others to follow Him. So the apostle continues this thought in Hebrews 10:19, 22: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus...let us draw near." As Christ has already entered there as our forerunner, it is now possible for us also to enter, with confidence or boldness, through His blood.

Paul knew this entrance of Christ "within the veil" to be an accomplished fact in his day. There was no possible conception of waiting 1,813 years for the event, because Christ had already entered heaven, itself, to be with God.

There is nothing confusing in this issue. The Scriptures are clear that Christ, after He had purged our sins upon the cross, entered heaven, itself, to the very presence of God, as our forerunner. God did not vacate a most holy place and come from behind a veil to be with Christ in a first apartment for 1,800 years, and then retire with His Son and the throne "within the veil" after

1844 A.D. No, indeed! Christ went in to be with God at His ascension, and has been sitting there on God's right hand ever since.

The following paragraph from the American *Signs of the Times* for October 4, 1938, written by the editor, shows where our confidence should be during these changing times:

"Though we cannot remove ourselves physically from the scene, though we must needs feel, as it were, the wash of the waves upon us, and behold the desolation all around, yet we may have our souls' anchor embedded deep 'within the veil' of the temple of God above" (Hebrews 6:19).

No one will dispute the fact that the editor of the "Signs," in quoting Heb. 6:19, refers to the most holy place. It is indeed a blessed truth, that "our souls' anchor must be embedded deep 'within the veil'" of the most holy of the temple of God, as the editor above-quoted has written, but this was already true in the days of the apostle, Paul, when the epistle to the Hebrews was written.

"Within the veil" means "the most holy" to present-day writers, including even a Seventh-day Adventist editor. "Within the veil" meant "the most holy" to all the prophets, without exception. How inconsistent, then, to interpret Paul's use of the expression, "within the veil," to mean a supposed first apartment in heaven, when present-day usage, the most ancient usage from the time of Moses, and the unvaried usage of Paul's own day indisputably refers to it as the holiest of all!

"How readest thou?" Are you willing to follow the Scriptures entirely, even though this means relinquishing some views held in the past and perhaps involves some suffering for Christ's sake? And, have you also entered into the holiest of all "within the veil" through the blood of Christ? We need now the full light of the gospel, an important part of which is the teaching that Christ entered the most holy place of the Father's unveiled presence at His ascension. "Search the Scriptures," and "prove all things," for it is only by so doing we can be assured of knowing the truth so essential for these times.

(We gratefully acknowledge assistance from a brother, A. P. Ward, of the Fiji Islands who made available to us his tract on this subject, much of which is embodied in the foregoing study.)

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