

SECRETS *of the* FUTURE

Signs of The Times | Part 3

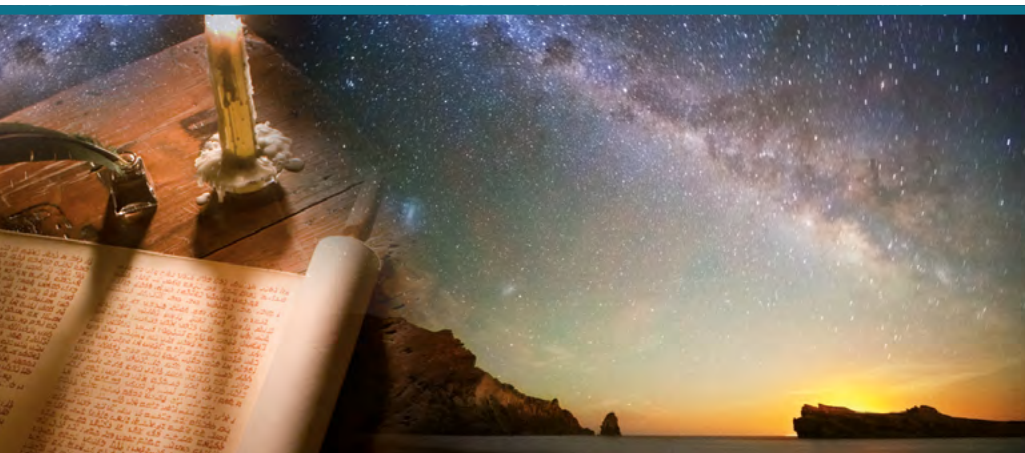


SIGNS OF THE TIMES

One of the fastest growing interest sectors in today's society is astrology. Celebrities, politicians and millions of other people are looking to the stars to help them with their future. One of the clairvoyants to the stars is the psychic "Nikki". Nikki appears on radio and television programs throughout the United States and claims to have predicted the deaths of Crocodile Hunter Steve Irwin and actor Heath Ledger. Each year she looks into the stars to predict a range of events and trends ranging from natural disasters to the styles of men's fashion.

Mapping and reading the heavens began with the mystical religion of Babylon. Stars and planets were the gods and goddesses of nature and therefore primary indicators of divine will. The ancients would read the omens in the sky to predict weather patterns, famines, wars and the fate of kings and nations.

Is astrology an art or a science? How accurate are the predictions? Is there really anything in it, or is it just a sham?



Whatever your view may be of astrology, the revealed secrets of prophecy are both specific and amazingly accurate. In fact the God who created the stars wrote the predictions, and it is He who also reveals them. The Creator God bases His authenticity on the absolute accuracy of the prophecies of Scripture (Isaiah 46:9,10).

In this study guide we will uncover one of the most relevant prophecies for our time – the signs associated with the Second Coming of Jesus.

As background reading it would be helpful to read the whole chapter of Matthew 24. This chapter has the Second Coming of Jesus as the central focus.

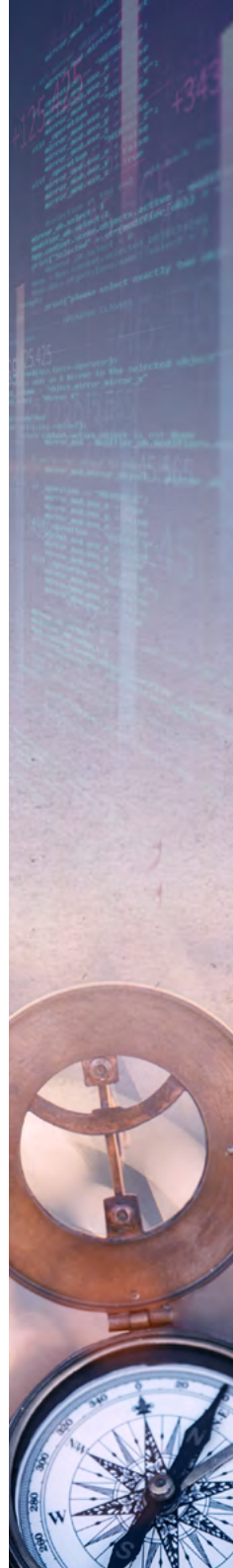
Q1.

WHAT DID JESUS SAY WAS MORE IMPORTANT THAN BEING ABLE TO READ THE HEAVENS?

Matthew 16:2,3 - *When it is evening you say, "It will be fair weather, for the sky is red"; and in the morning, "it will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening." Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the _____ of the*

.....

The religious leaders in the days of Jesus could read the heavens but not the prophetic signs of the Scriptures. The Old Testament was full of prophecies relating to the coming of the Messiah, and yet they



totally misunderstood them. Here was Jesus standing before them and yet they could not see the “signs of the times”, the direct fulfilment of the prophecies that pointed to Jesus as their Messiah.



Q2.

WHAT SPECIFIC SIGNS WERE THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST MOST INTERESTED IN?

Matthew 24:3 - *“Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of _____, and of the end of the age?”*

.....

The disciples correctly saw the Second Coming and the end of the world (or age) as virtually the same event. They asked Jesus to tell them what signs or signals would indicate when this event would be near.



Q3.

DOES ANYONE KNOW THE EXACT DATE OF JESUS' COMING?

Matthew 24:36 - *But of that day and hour ___ one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only*

.....

Over the years a number of people have predicted an exact date for the coming of Jesus. However, notice what this commentator said, "Everyone who predicted the end of the world had one thing in common. They were wrong" (J. Gordon Melton). Jesus said that no-one knows the date except for God. Predicting dates not only results in disappointment and discouragement, it also encourages people to ridicule the Bible.

Q4.

CAN WE KNOW WHEN THE RETURN OF JESUS IS NEAR?

Matthew 24:32,33 - *Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near – at the _____*

.....

Although Jesus warns us against predicting dates, He does tell us to investigate the prophecies and world events in order to see when His coming is near. Just as there were many prophecies regarding the first coming of Jesus, there are also clear prophecies relating to the Second Coming of Jesus.

Q5.

WHAT ILLUSTRATION DOES JESUS USE WHEN DESCRIBING THE SIGNS OF CHRIST'S RETURN?

Matthew 24:8 - *All these are the beginning of _____*

.....

After outlining a number of prophetic signs Jesus said they were the “beginning of sorrows”. The word sorrow comes from the Greek word “Odin” which literally means the beginning of birth pains. Jesus used the illustration of childbirth as an example to describe the signs of His return.



Just as birth contractions increase in frequency and intensity as the mother gets closer to the birth of her child, so it is the signs of Christ's return become more frequent and intense as we near the end of time.

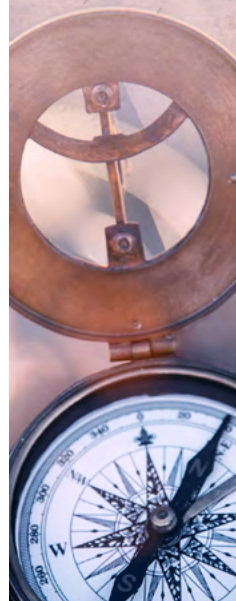
Q6.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SIGNS ASSOCIATED WITH THE VERY LAST DAYS BEFORE JESUS RETURNS?

a. Signs in the political world

WAR

Matthew 24:6,7 - And you will hear of _____ and rumours of _____ (v6) For nation will rise _____ nation, and kingdom _____ kingdom (v7)



Jesus pointed to international war as one of the signs of the last days. In the last century we had two world wars and an estimated average of over 30 wars on the planet every year.

According to the Worldwatch Institute, every hour the world is spending \$100 million on soldiers, ammunitions and wars. In fact, the world spends nearly 80 times more money on the military than it would cost to provide basic water and sanitation for the world (worldwatch.org). With at least nine nuclear capable countries and an estimated 27,000 nuclear bombs in stock, the words of Jesus certainly ring true.

TERRORISM

Luke 21:25,26 - ... *and on the earth _____ of nations (v25) Men's hearts failing them from _____ and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth (v26)*

Never before have we seen such tension, distress and fear among nations and people as we have today. A rapidly changing world and the increased threat of terrorism have resulted in people feeling unsafe. At a time when world leaders are talking about peace and security (1 Thessalonians 5:3) we are feeling a loss of control in our own lives. Increased heart attacks and stress have resulted from the anxiety of everyday life.

b. Signs in the physical world

EARTHQUAKES, FAMINES AND DISEASE

Matthew 24:7 - ... *And there will be _____, _____ and _____ in various places*

Up until the 19th century there were just over 2,000 recorded earthquakes. According to the United States Geological Survey program, we now see 500,000 detected quakes each year. An increase in earthquakes and resulting tsunamis are another sign that Jesus is coming back soon.

In terms of famines, the statistics are also alarming. The United Nations Habitat program reports that a billion people do not get enough food; 500 million are chronically malnourished.

The global population was 250 million at the time of Christ. It took 1900 years to reach 2 billion, just 75 years to reach the next 2 billion, then just 25 years to reach the next 2 billion. This earth is populating at such a rate that we have just passed the mark for not having enough arable land to feed the planet, even if we wanted to. Added to this, fresh water levels are diminishing at such a rate that experts are predicting that half the world will live in areas of critical water shortage within 20 years (Jamal Saghir, Director of energy and water, World Bank).

Pestilences are also a sign of the end. These “pests” are not just plant eating locusts or fruit fly; it includes disease. The *National Geographic* reports that 3,000 people die each day from a mosquito bite, mostly children from Africa. As we near the end of the world, there will be a whole range of new exotic diseases, spread around the world through travel and refugees. One of the greatest concerns relates to the different strains of flu (eg Bird flu, Swine flu) which appear to be increasing in variety, frequency and severity.



There appears to be a growing trend towards disease from what we eat, particularly through meat products.

We are also fast running out of energy resources (coal, oil and gas) and climate change is occurring to such an extent that this issue is now seen as a greater threat to humanity than terrorism.

What is clear is that even the nature around us is demonstrating the soon return of Jesus.

c. Signs in the business world

CAPITALISM AND GLOBALISM

James 5:1-8 - *Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming on you! ...You have heaped up treasure in the last days. Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you _____ back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord ...You have lived on the earth in pleasure and _____...You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand*

Here we find rich men taking advantage of the low wages of the poor, while they live in luxury. Capitalism, with little social conscience, is a key aspect of the move towards a global economy in these last days. The world's richest men are increasing their wealth by multiplication not addition. The United Nations Development Report indicates that the world's richest 500 people have more wealth than the combined income of the world's poorest 416 million inhabitants.



Even in the United States the richest 1 percent of the nation has more wealth than the bottom 95 percent of the nation.

The Bible predicts that just before Jesus returns the financial systems of the world will collapse. Money will be hard to come by and the rich who have taken advantage of the poor will lose their great wealth (Revelation 18:11).

INCREASED KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNOLOGY

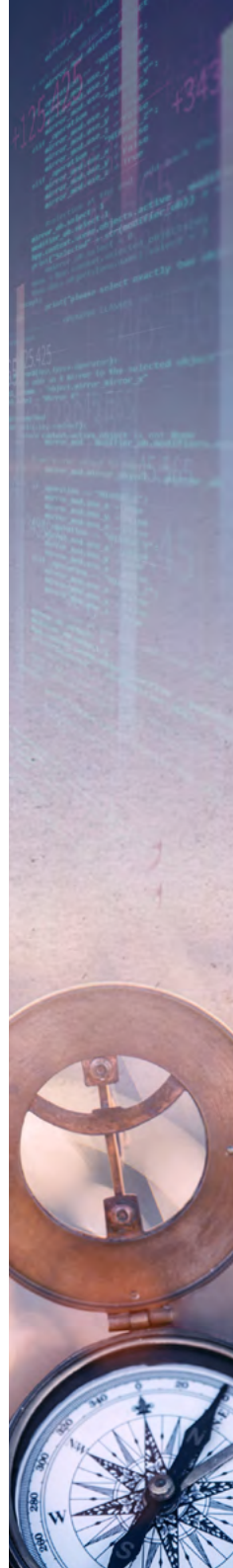
Daniel 12:4 - *But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and _____ shall increase*

No sooner is a new computer, phone or sound system launched, it quickly becomes superseded by a new technology. At a Sony BMG conference in Rome a report was presented indicating that new technology is doubling every two years. There is more unique information developed each year than the previous 5,000 years combined and a week's worth of news from the *New York Times* contains more information that the average person would come across in an entire lifetime living in the 18th century. It is certainly true today that people are stressed out rushing "to and fro" and knowledge has increased.

d. Signs in the social world

A MORAL COLLAPSE

Matthew 24:37 - *But as the days of _____ were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be*



Genesis 6:5 - *Then the Lord saw that the _____ of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil*

Jesus said that just before He returns, the earth will be in the same moral state as it was before the flood. At that time the world had become so wicked that only eight people chose to follow God's instructions and be saved. The remainder, by their own choice, were destroyed.

A PREOCCUPATION WITH PLEASURE

2 Timothy 3:1-5 - *But know this that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be... lovers of _____ rather than lovers of God (v1,2,4)*

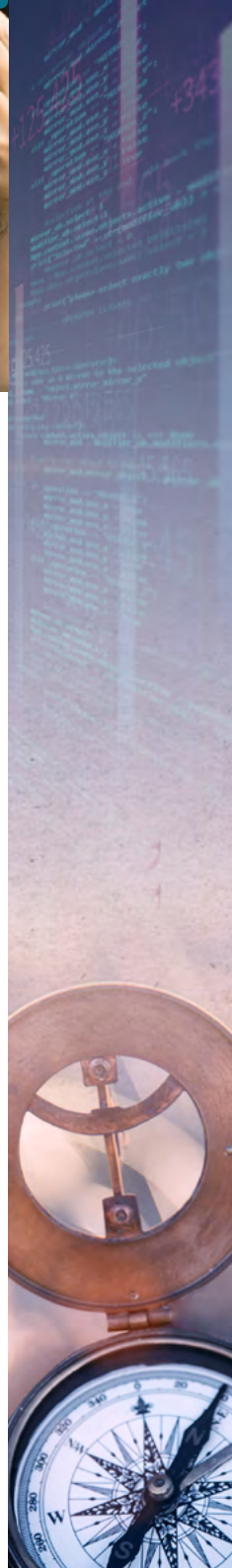
Sport and Leisure – the great love of the last days. As we jam pack hotel pleasure resorts, sports stadiums and spend endless hours in front of our home theatres, we can see a direct fulfilment of this sign of the last days.

DISOBEDIENT CHILDREN

2 Timothy 3:1,2 - *But know this that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be... _____ to parents*

These days, it is a real challenge to bring up children. Parents are losing hope. Some want to give up. It is a crazy world where we find children now officially divorcing from their parents!

Author and commentator Michael Medved claims the average American child will spend more time watching TV by the age of six than they will spend talking with their father in an entire lifetime (Center of the American Experiment). The influence of film, television and music has had a major impact on the family.



BREAKDOWN IN LOVE RELATIONSHIPS

Matthew 24:12 - *And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow _____*

Marriages today are falling apart at a staggering rate. People are still searching for love, but say it's too difficult to find. Spouses have become "partners" and the breakdown of the family is a key sign of the last days.

e. Signs in the religious world

PEOPLE WILL RIDICULE THE MESSAGE OF THE SECOND COMING

2 Peter 3:3,4 - *Knowing this first: that _____ will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying "where is the promise of His _____"*

There is a growing movement away from religion and churches towards a broad-based inner spirituality. In fact although Jesus promised us He would return (John 14:1-3) many Christians do not even take the Second Coming of Christ seriously. The Bible says this is a sign of the last days.

DECEPTION THROUGH FALSE MIRACLES, PROPHETS AND CHRISTS

Matthew 24:24 - *For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great _____ and _____ to deceive, if possible, even the elect*

Four times in Matthew 24 Jesus warns against religious deception. This miracle working religious deception is moving quickly through religious circles and is a major sign of the last days.



There are numerous people today claiming to be Jesus Christ. One such person is Jose Luis de Jesus Miranda. This man, who shows a “666” tattoo on his forearm, has a global media network and has appeared on CNN, CBS and Fox claiming to be “the Man Christ Jesus” and claiming hundreds of churches and millions of followers.

The Bible indicates that in the last days it will be false christs and false miracles that will be used to unite the nations into a false religious system (Revelation 13:13,14; 16:14)

MOVEMENT TOWARDS SPIRITUALISM

1 Timothy 4:1 - *Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving _____ and doctrines of _____*

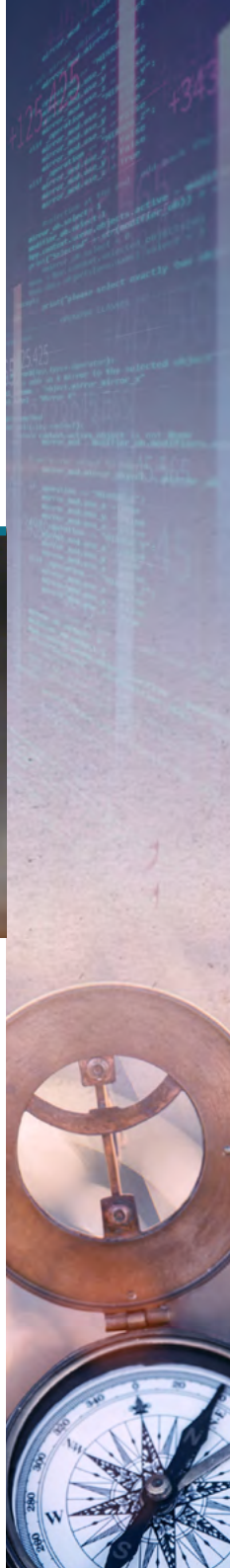
It wasn't too many years ago when movies and television were subtle regarding the supernatural. Now it is a key theme of many programs. Mediums, witches, devils and communication with the dead are all seen as mainstream.



DECLINE OF GENUINE CHRISTIANITY

2 Tim 3:1-5 - *But know this that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves ... having a _____ of godliness but denying its _____ (v1,2,5)*

Jesus said in the last days there would be many people who will look like Christians, yet they will not experience true spirituality. There are countless "one day a week" Christians. They profess to be Christians but do not experience the power of God.



GOSPEL PREACHED ALL OVER THE WORLD

Matt 24:14 - *And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in ____ the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.*

Many of the signs of Christ's return are a reflection of a sad and evil world. Now we have the good news! A unique message of hope is spreading throughout the world in these last days. This gospel message found in Revelation 14:6-12 can now be transmitted through satellite and internet technology. Jesus has promised that once this message has reached everyone in the world, the end will then come.



Q7.

WHAT IS THE GREATEST DANGER ASSOCIATED WITH THE SOON COMING OF JESUS?

Matthew 24:44 - *Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not _____*

.....

Even if we know that Jesus is coming soon, we need to be ready as if He were coming today. Peter says that Jesus will come as a “thief in the night” (2 Peter 3:10). We lock our doors and windows each night because we know a thief could come. Yet, when it happens it gives us a great shock. We cannot afford to delay our preparation for the coming of Jesus. We need to be ready now.

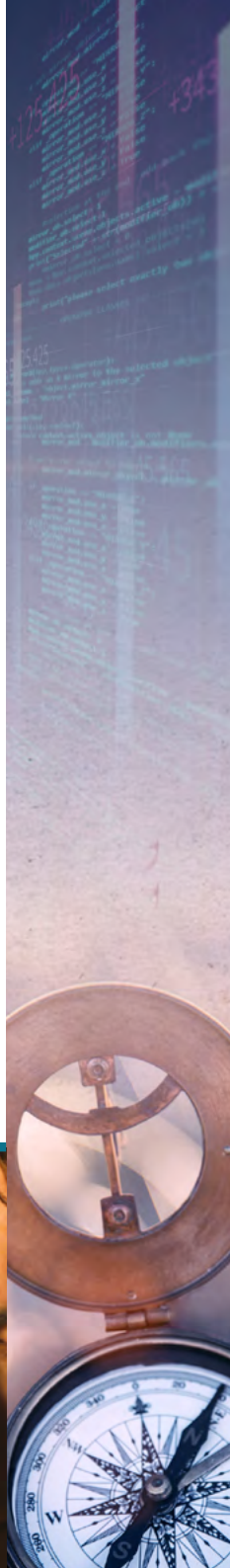
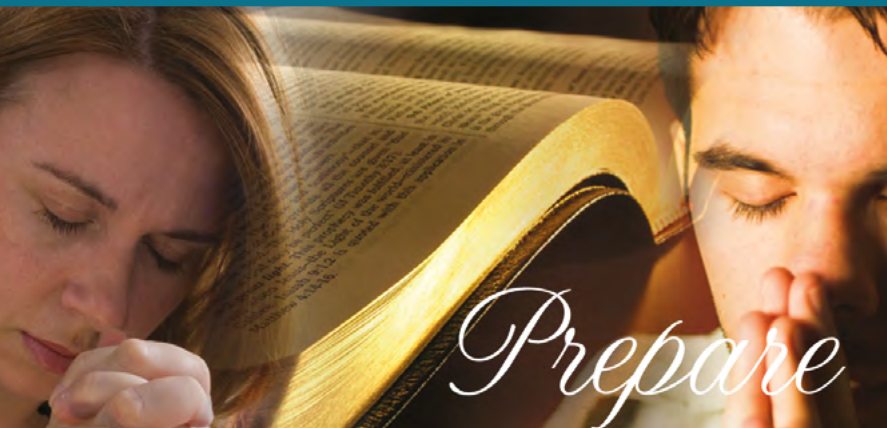
Q8.

HOW CAN WE BE READY FOR JESUS TO COME?

Revelation 3:20 - *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone _____ My voice and _____ the door, I will come into him and dine with him, and he with Me*

.....

Firstly we need to be listening to hear the knock from Jesus, asking if He can enter into our lives. Secondly, we need to open the door and ask Him to come in. Have you accepted Jesus as your personal Saviour and asked Him to become an important part of your life?



Three points to remember

- No-one knows exactly when Jesus will return
- The signs indicate Jesus is coming soon
- To be ready for Jesus we need to prepare now

The story:

A young boy from Australia was sleeping one night in his Sydney home. He woke up through the night to find a man staring right at him as the boy lay in his bed. Frightened, the young boy believed this man to be a dangerous thief who could harm him. The young boy decided his best hope was to close his eyes, stay silent and hope for the best. After a while the thief did leave the home and fortunately, the boy was safe.

When that young boy grew up he read from the Bible that Jesus would come like a “thief in the night” to those who aren’t ready. As he thought about this he realised that on that day it would be no use closing his eyes, staying silent and hoping for the best. True safety would only come if he accepted Jesus as his Friend now. He decided to commit his life to Jesus and be ready and waiting for Jesus to come.

What lessons can you learn from this story?

Relational Questions:

1. Do you think the Second Coming is an important subject? Why?
2. Does the soon return of Jesus scare you or make you excited?
3. What do you need to do specifically in your life to ensure you are ready for Jesus to come? Are there any barriers that still need to be removed?
4. What do you think will be the first thing you say to Jesus when He returns?

Your Response:

Is it your desire to prepare now to be ready for the Second Coming of Jesus? If so, would you like to ask Jesus to be your personal Saviour and trust Him to guide and direct your life? _____



HOW WILL *the* WORLD END?

What will the Second Coming of Jesus look like? Some describe it as a rapture, in which people will mysteriously vanish. But is this what the Bible says? Learn about it in Part 4 of the Secrets of the Future series. Email or call Hope Channel to continue your journey.



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