Favorite Chapters - Revelation 5

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Date: 19 October 2025

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. And tonight we're starting a series called Favorite Chapters. We did this back in the spring on Sunday evenings as well.

But essentially each of our pastors will get an opportunity on a Sunday night to pick their favorite chapter and walk our church through it. And so I think it's a great thing we're doing. There's only one rule. We have to preach the entire chapter.
So you can rate how well we do starting tonight. We'll be in Revelation chapter 5 if you want to take your Bibles and open with me there. Revelation was written by the Apostle John while he was in exile on the island of Patmos.
He was put there as a result of persecution for the gospel. He was preaching the gospel and was persecuted and as part of that persecution was exiled by himself to this island called Patmos.
He was likely at this point the last remaining apostle. All the others had died, most of whom had died because of persecution. And so likely he's the last one left alive.
[1:20] Revelation was written in the late 90s to 100 AD. And so John would have been about in his 80s at this point. Last remaining apostle in his 80s.

And this book of Revelation is really a series of visions that John received from Christ and was told to write down for the churches to whom he wrote. And so there are many mystifying and breathtaking things that he saw in these visions and that he records in this book.
But we need to remember this is ultimately a letter written to churches. Written to these churches in Asia Minor that were suffering greatly from persecution and from difficulties both within in terms of doctrine and relationships and on the outside with enemies who were persecuting them.
And these visions that John receives reveal part of the future to us. Not every single detail of the future by any means, but they do reveal the future to us.
The book of Revelation should be treasured by us both individually and as a church. I remember when I was in late high school and even into early college, I would often think it would just be so helpful if I could just see five to ten years down the road.
[2:41] If I could just see where I'll end up in five to ten years. That would help me with my anxiety. I wouldn't know. I would have some frame of reference for what to expect in the future. It would just be so helpful if I could just get a glimpse of what my life will be like in five to ten years.

And in a sense, that's what the book of Revelation is for the church. It's a glimpse into the future. What will our future look like?
And ultimately, this book culminates in the presence of God forever. And so this book contains many disastrous things for the earth as a planet and for the wicked and ungodly who are rebelling against God and very many glorious realities for those who have repented of their sins and trusted in Christ.
God has given us this book to comfort us and to assure us of how the future will unfold for God's people. And if you've ever had the privilege of flying on a plane or climbing to the top of a mountain and looking out the window or looking from the peak, it's a majestic view.
And for a moment, you feel so small in comparison to what you're seeing. Whether it's the tops of the clouds or the footprints of the land around the mountain you're on, everything seems so transcendent.
[4:05] And for just a moment, you forget about some of the difficulties you have at work. You forget about some of the difficulties that have been weighing on you and your family.

You're just in awe of the beauty and splendor of what you're seeing. And chapter five is that breath of fresh air for us as a church, especially for these churches that were being persecuted.

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Will this persecution ever end? What's going on in heaven right now while we're being afflicted? And John sees this vision of heaven in chapters four and five.
These two chapters comprise one vision that John saw. If you look at the beginning of chapter four with me, John's seen the risen Christ in chapter one.
In chapters two and three, he gives specific instructions to each of these seven churches. And in chapter four, after this, I looked and behold a door standing open into heaven.
[5:11] And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, come up here and I will show you what must take place after this. At once I was in the spirit and behold, a throne stood in heaven with one seated on the throne.

And this first vision is dominated by God, the father. He is the one who is seated on the throne. And it's also dominated by the theme of creation. If you look at chapter four, verse 11, worthy are you, our Lord and God to receive glory and honor and power.
Why? For you created all things and by your will, they existed and were created. Chapter four focuses in on God, the father focuses in on creation.
Chapter five, kind of part two of this vision focuses in on the son and redemption. And so John has seen this majestic presence of God, the glory of God seated on the throne in the heavenly places. And he's receiving glory and honor. He is in control. He is being praised for what he has done with his world.
[6:24] We'll have three points tonight. Number one, who is worthy? Who is worthy? John says in chapter five, then I saw, and that phrase I saw carries along this vision.

It appears four times in chapter five, taking us onto the next point that John is explaining in the vision. I saw in the right hand of him who is seated on the throne.
And this is a reference to God himself, to God, the father ruling and reigning on his throne. And it's worth noting that John doesn't seem to ever take a long look directly at the father.
He keeps referencing the throne. The Lord's glory is too majestic for him to look directly at him. He can describe what's going on around him. He can describe the throne, but he really doesn't get much up past the footstool of that throne.
It's like looking at the son. You can't look directly at it. You can look around it and describe what's around it. And John describes what he sees. But even in this vision, the Lord's glory is too majestic, too brilliant to look directly into as a sinner.
[7:45] And notice that God is seated in perfect calm. There's chaos breaking out on earth.

The church is being persecuted. The church is being faithless in some cases. Chaos is about to break out on the earth even. And the Lord's not at the whiteboard.
He's not biting his nails. He's on his throne. He's receiving praise and honor and glory. He is where he should be receiving what is due him.
All hell is going to break out on earth in chapters 6 through 19. But we get this majestic glimpse of God seated on his throne.
There will be chaos on earth, but he is peacefully presiding over it. There will be a whirlwind of violence that breaks out from heaven toward the wicked on earth. And he is in control of it.
[8:44] He's got the whole world in his hands. And John has seen him seated there. And he's heard the worship that's been given to him in chapter 4.

But now something catches his eye in chapter 5. He saw something in his right hand. It was a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.
The scroll is integral to this chapter unfolding. It's mentioned eight times here in this chapter. And it really tells us how this whole book is going to unfold and how this whole book is going to be structured.
And so John sees this scroll rolled up in his right hand, sealed on the throne, and it's written within and on the back. And so it's rolled up, so the contents on the inside are hidden, but there's obviously something written on it.
It's also got a little description on the back side, kind of like books do today, where the content is between the covers. There are little blurbs and stuff on the back describing what's been written. And it's sealed with seven seals.
[9:54] These seals are globs of wax that have been melted and likely pressed or stamped with a signature of some kind that authoritatively holds this scroll sealed.

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And it's not that these seals would have been impossible to break. It's just wax, but it's authoritative. And so it's kind of like a sealed envelope. It's not difficult to open.
It's an authority issue. If it's not addressed to you, you can't open it. Or like tape at a crime scene. It's not that it's impossible to get past. It's an authority issue. Same thing with this scroll.
Someone needs to be able to open this scroll. But what is this scroll? What is written on it? Why is it sealed? Well, if you read the prophets, Daniel in particular, who's prophesying of the end times, Daniel chapter 12, verses four and nine, the Lord speaks to Daniel and says, seal up the words of this vision.
Therefore, the end of time. And so I take it that what's written on this scroll is the culmination or the fulfillment of these end time prophecies that the Lord has already made.
[11:13] And these seals will carry along the narrative of this book. As the seals are broken in heaven, judgment rings out on the earth. As another seal is opened, another wave of judgment comes from the throne to the earth.

As the scroll itself is opened, more and more judgments are unleashed as God is bringing about his plan for his world. And so written on this scroll is God's plan for the ultimate fulfillment of all of his promises.
What's written on this scroll is the restoration of the entire universe, a setting back in order of the things that he originally made. And in order to do that, massive amounts of judgment have to take place.
It's a scroll of doom, but it's through that doom that God brings full and final salvation. And I'll read chapter one, verse one for you. You don't have to turn there, but just listen.
How does John describe this book? The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place.
[12:26] This book is a revelation from Christ that the father gave to Christ to tell his people. And so in a, at least in part, the contents of this scroll are really this book that we're studying tonight.

And it's sealed up currently. Verse two, John says, I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice.
We don't know who this angel is, but he's strong and he has a big voice. Goals, right? Want to be strong and have a big voice. What does he use this big voice to say?
Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals? And this booming voice echoes down through every level of the universe.
And it receives no answer. There is dead silence. No one even steps forward.
[13:29] This is what happens when a youth Sunday school teacher says, who would like to pray for us? Just, no eye contact. No one steps forward. No one volunteers.

No one is worthy. Verse three, no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or look into it.
There's a comprehensive search of the entire universe from the heights of heaven to the depths of hell and everywhere in between. And there was no angel, no patriarch, no Old Testament saint, no Old Testament prophet, no apostle, no New Testament martyr.
No one was able to open this scroll. In order to be able to open it, you have to be worthy.
And so no one was worthy. No created being, no created person is able to do this.
[14:27] verse four, John says, I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.

He wept loudly. We would describe this as sobbing or having uncontrollable emotion or ugly crying. He lost control.
He was openly weeping and wailing because no one was worthy to open the scroll or to look into it and he's overwhelmed by the weight of what that means. He's overwhelmed by the gravity of no one being able to open this scroll because if no one can, then God's promises for the future will not come to pass.
God's promises for this world will not come true. Sin will continue to plague this world and Satan will continue to have dominion forever. If this scroll remains sealed, there is no hope for humanity or for the world.
These are John's tears that he's crying. But they represent the tears that have been cried by every righteous person who's longing for the fulfillment of God's promises.

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[15:43] These are Adam's tears as they were driven from the garden because of their sin. Will God really send a deliverer? These are Eve's tears as she buries her righteous son.

The first human death in the history of the world. Will God send another son? These are the Israelites' tears as they're wasting away in Egyptian slavery, crying out, will God actually deliver us? Will we inherit what God has promised to us? These are Jesus' tears as he weeps over Jerusalem. them, frustrated by their unbelief. These are our tears as we stand at the graveside of a departed friend.
When will we see them again? These are our tears as we wonder, will this suffering end? Will it be used by the Lord?
John is the one crying these tears as he wonders who will deliver us from this cursed world. But we can relate to his pain, can't we? He understands the implications of this.
[17:00] And his grief is real, but it's short-sighted. We see secondly, weep no more. Weep no more.

Verse five, one of the elders said to me, weep no more. Behold. And so one of these elders comes to him, this seems to be an order within the angelic ranks.
There's 24 of them around the throne. I take 12 of them to be representing the 12 tribes of Israel, 12 to be representing the apostles, so the church and Israel. And he says, stop weeping.
And then he says, behold. John, there's somewhere you need to look. There's someone to whom you should look. The lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered.
So that he can open the scroll and its seven seals. He's described as the lion of the tribe of Judah. This is Jesus he's talking about. This comes from Genesis 49 where it talks about Judah as a tribe being like a lion.
[18:14] And the scepter not departing from Judah. And so we know that Jesus has descended from Judah and we can trace that promise back to places like Genesis 49. And so this angel is calling him the lion of the tribe of lions.

He's the chief lion from this tribe. He's the chief son from the tribe of Judah. And so we've been expecting this king to arise from Judah's tribe who's both royal and lethal.
He's described as the root of David. This comes from Isaiah 11. And it's interesting because he's a descendant of David but he's described as the root or the source of David.
He is David's son yet David's Lord. And the angel says he has conquered.
He has conquered. He has conquered through his death and his resurrection. He has conquered our sin and he has conquered death itself so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.
[19:27] Because he has conquered he can do this. He is worthy because he has conquered. And now he has conquered sin and death and now he is set to conquer the world.

He is able to open this scroll and bring all of God's promises to full bloom. He's the only person in the universe who is worthy.
Only one who is able to do this. And so John hears about this lion. Behold this lion.
But he turns and looks and he sees a lamb. verse 6. Between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a lamb standing as though it had been slain.
With seven horns and with seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. This lamb had been slaughtered but it's alive.
[20:35] John could see the lethal wounds this lamb had received and yet it was living. And so this calls to mind John the Baptist statement in John 1 29.

Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He takes this sin away through sacrifice. He was slain for us.
And you think about John being able to see that this lamb had died and yet it was living. after Jesus' resurrection when he appears to his disciples what is it they can still see?
They can see his scars. They can see that he died and yet he's alive forevermore. And so John hears about a lion a royal lethal ruler but he sees a little Passover lamb.
A lamb that was killed in place of his people. And so this is such a strange mixture of terms. He's a warrior lamb. He's a mighty lamb.
[21:49] It just doesn't sound that intimidating. It's like the Chickasha fighting chicks. You're like you had me with fighting but one author described him as a lion-like lamb and a lamb-like lion and these descriptions are true but they just don't naturally fit together.

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And you think about David this boy who went out and killed a giant and after he decapitates Goliath for the rest of the narrative he's just carrying around his head.
And so at the end of the chapter you've got this boy no armor on no sword holding the decapitated head of a giant. What a weird mixture of innocence and severity.
And as we think about Christ the lion and the lamb it's a glorious picture isn't it? Of his conquest that's coming and of his sacrifice that's been made.
a victorious Messiah who conquers by being killed. He's a majestic lion that's demonstrated his worthiness through sacrifice. He's able to open this scroll not because he destroyed his enemies but because he laid down his life for sinners.
[23:13] And now he's about to destroy his enemies. But he is conquered through his suffering. suffering. And it's quite an interesting lamb that John is seeing. Obviously it represents Christ but this lamb has seven horns and seven eyes.

And horns and you think of the animal world demonstrate power and strength. And so he is strong and there's seven the number of completion in the book of Revelation.
And you think of the creation week seven full days is a complete week. And so he has complete power or as we would say omnipotence. And he has seven eyes as well which demonstrate omniscience, knowing everything because he sees everything.
It can also be an example of omnipresence. He's able to observe everything going on in this created universe. Nothing escapes his notice. But these eyes have a further description which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all this the earth.
And in Isaiah 11, a chapter that John has already borrowed from to describe this lion, describes the spirit in seven different ways.
[24:33] It's Isaiah 11, 2. And so seven spirits doesn't mean there's seven different holy spirits but again this is the fullness of the spirit that's been sent out into the world and it was after Jesus ascended that he sent out the spirit into the world.

Verse seven, focusing in again on the lamb and he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.
If you read passages like Daniel 7 where one like a son of man approaches the ancient of days, walks right up to the throne and sits down next to him. This is a lot in common with that but this lamb, this lion and this lamb walk up to the throne and take the scroll.
He's not just willing to approach the father. He's not just willing to walk up to the throne. He belongs at the throne.
He's worthy to be at the throne. He has the authority to take this scroll from the father's hand. Redemption is about to be brought to its completion.
[25:48] The biblical storyline is about to be happily ever after. Jesus has arrived to take what is his. And we see thirdly, the worship of the lamb.

The worship of the lamb. The entire universe breaks out in song. And this praise has been pent up for thousands of years and it comes gushing out of these angels.
Not that they haven't worshipped for this thousands of years but this is the moment they've been waiting for. And there are three songs sung by three different choirs. The songs are arranged from longest to shortest and the choirs go from the smallest to the largest.
So the first song is the longest song sung by the smallest choir. The third song is the shortest song sung by the largest choir. And so when the lamb takes the scroll from him who is seated on the throne, this seismic event that takes place at the throne ruptures out expanding to the entire universe.
And each song that's sung is dedicated to this lamb. verse 8, and when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures, angelic beings, and the 24 elders, other angelic beings, fell down before the lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints.
[27:28] And so they fall down before the lamb to worship him. They're giving him what he is due. And it says each one is holding a harp and golden bowls.

Harps are instruments of joy and worship in the Old Testament. They're also very often associated with prophecy. And so it's a fitting image to describe both their joy but also the content of what's about to be revealed in this scroll.
And they have golden bowls full of incense and it describes for us what this means which are the prayers of the saints. These are the prayers offered by God's people from all time who have prayed

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that one day the Lord would carry out his will fully and finally on this earth.
Who have prayed and said what John says at the end of this book, come Lord Jesus, come quickly.
Have you prayed for God to bring his promises to pass?
Have you prayed for Jesus to return quickly? Have you prayed for God's glory to fill the earth like the waters cover the sea? Your prayers are in these bowls.
[28:49] Your prayers will not go unanswered finally. God's not putting them in the landfill. He is storing them up in these bowls. And one day they will be answered.

Verse 9, they sang a new song. New songs are sung for new acts of salvation. They're saying worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals.
What is it that makes him worthy? Well, it's who he is by nature, but it's also what he has done. It's who he is and what he's done.
He is like no one else and so he's able to accomplish what no one else can. And he is worthy for three reasons listed here in this song. For you were slain, you ransomed people, and verse 10, you have made them a kingdom.
them. So they say first for you were slain. You were killed as a sacrifice, but he's not just worthy because his life was taken from him.
[30:01] Plenty of people have been slain. Plenty of people have died. But he's worthy because of who he is. His death qualifies him for this event because he is the worthy one.

And he was slain in accordance to the father's will. And with his blood, he ransomed people for God.
He purchased them out of slavery by his blood. And these people come from every tribe and language and people and nation. And so it's not saying that all people everywhere will be saved, meaning everyone will end up in heaven one day.
But as the gospel goes out, every tribe will be represented. Every language will be represented because Christ's blood is sufficient to save his people to the ends of the earth.
He has done this with his death. And not only did he purchase them, but he's made them a kingdom and priest to our God and they shall reign on the earth.
[31:08] This is humanity's original purpose. He created Adam and Eve and told them to have dominion over the things that God had made.

And here we finally see God's people ruling and reigning over the creation that God has made. They will reign on the earth.
Verse 11, then I looked, there's that phrase again, same word, and I saw, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders, the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands.
And so the choir grows larger now. It's not just the four living creatures and the 24 elders. That word myriad means 10,000. It was the biggest number that the Greek world could put into words.
10,000, 10,000s. And so we don't know how many angels were created in the beginning. We know about a third of them fell with Satan, but the number that's represented here is in the millions.
[32:12] It's in the hundred millions of angels who are worshiping and praising God. And they're saying with a loud voice, verse 12, worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.

He's worthy to receive these things and there are seven things mentioned here. this is a sevenfold blessing. He's worthy of it all. He's worthy to receive all of this and none of this can come from the angels.
None of this can come from men. These are blessings that God must give him and the angels are saying he's worth it. He's worthy of all of it. Verse 13, the choir grows larger once again.
I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is in them.
This is every single creature. Even unbelievers? Yes. Not from a heart that loves Christ, but yes.
[33:34] This is what Paul mentioned in Philippians 2 that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Even the demons? Yes. Again, not from a heart that loves Christ but recognizing who he is and they're saying to him who sits on the throne and to the lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever.

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They, the Father and the Son receive this worship together. They receive it side by side. They're both worshiped. And John was a monotheist.
He did not believe in multiple gods. And yet here he sees this vision of the Father and the Son both receiving worship and he doesn't cry heresy because the Father and the Son share in the same divine nature.
They are two distinct persons and yet we worship them both as God without worshiping multiple gods.
[34:44] Both of them sitting there together receive this worship from all of creation. Be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever.

And their silence once again. As the choir's song comes to an end and the four living creatures said amen.
And the elders fell down and worshiped. It's their stamp of approval on everything that's been said about the lamb. And they fell down and worshiped him.
This is how deity is honored. This is how deity is worshipped. No man is worth being bowed down to. And both the lamb and the father are bowed down to.
The living creature said amen. And all of God's promises in Christ are yes and amen. I can't imagine what this sounded like in John's ears.
[35:58] I can't imagine everything he saw in this chapter but as good as it is to read about this, imagine how you'll feel when you hear it. Imagine how you'll feel when you add your voice to this choir as the lamb begins to break these seals open.

what will we feel? What will we be thinking? I don't know what all we'll feel on that day. I do know that what we're doing tonight as we sing to him and as we study his word is the most important thing in the universe.
It will outlast this universe. And so when we come to church we sing to the lamb who is worthy of our praise and we study his word written to us preparing for this day, preparing for when we will see him face to face and personally give him this glory and honor that he is due.
So why should we study the book of Revelation? Why should we study the end times? Because it's focused on Christ. and you can get so lost in some of the details and the details are important, study them, master them, understand them.
But if you get lost in the details and forget Christ, you're misusing this book. You're misusing the doctrine of eschatology. Worship the one that these details point to.
[37:36] And Revelation can be an intimidating book to encounter, encounter, but there's a reason that this is a favorite book among people who are persecuted. Chapters 4 and 5 alone just take us above the chaos.

Just take us above the difficulties of this life and say, yes, I can't wait for that. Regardless of whatever issues you have in your life or trials you're going through, this book is a transport to majestic heights where we see God's transcendent glory in Christ.
And in this book we don't just get a glimpse of God himself, we don't just get a glimpse of the lamb, we also see what he's going to do to this world. He will do away with evil.
He will recreate the world itself and he'll do this on the basis of the lamb's death and resurrection. Christ's death and resurrection aren't just central to the gospel, aren't just central to your Christian life, they're central to the plot line of the universe.
They're central to this book of revelation. They're the focal point of the future. And so why do the gospels spend roughly 25% of their time talking about Christ's death, talking about his resurrection?
[39:01] Because those authors understood God, that because of what he did on Calvary, he's able to do what he's going to do in the future. Because he laid his life down, because he purchased his people, he is worthy now to unlock all of God's promises in the future.

He's worthy to carry out God's will for the future. And so we as God's people, we belong to God by creation. He has made us. We belong to him by redemption.
He has saved us. And we see this reflected in chapters 4 and 5. The father who created is praised. The son who redeems is praised.
And one day both of these truths will come together as the creation itself is washed in Jesus' blood and made brand new. And so worship the lamb because he is worthy.
Let's pray. Father, what more can we say than thank you for your son?

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[40:13] He's the lion who will one day return again to destroy all evil. But we recognize that what he did to one day serve as that lion was he became a lamb.

sacrificed in our place. Lord, I pray we would not forget the gospel. I pray that we would not move on from the love you've shown us in Christ.
The first church listed in this book was criticized because they had abandoned their first love. love.
And Lord, I pray that we would not be guilty of the same sin.
We would recognize that it's because Christ shed his blood that we're able to even pray to you right now. That we're able to gather as a church.
That we're able to have hope for the future. And so Lord, we pray that you would remind us that Christ lives forevermore. He died, but he lives forevermore.
[41:27] I pray that we would not only believe this gospel for ourselves and not only let it shape our church and our expectation for the future, but help it to shape our evangelism as well. This hope would spill out of us as we talk with those who have no hope and who are ignorant of Christ and don't know him.

Father, I pray that we would be able to look around on that day when all of creation is praising your son and see people there from every tribe and nation and language and tongue and say, by your grace, I shared the gospel with that person and they believed.
By your grace, we supported missionaries in that country who preached the gospel to that guy.
God, I pray that I pray that we would worship your son forever and ever because he is alive forevermore.
It's in Christ's name we pray. Amen. Thank you for being here tonight. You had every reason not to be here. Michael was gone. It's fall break. Cowboys are right in the middle of a game, but you were here, and so thank you.
You're dismissed. We'll see you next week. Bye.
[43:17] Bye. Bye.

Bye. Bye.
Bye. Bye.
Bye. Bye.
Bye. Bye.
[48:17] Bye. Bye.

Bye. Bye.

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