



You Cannot Burn a Pearl

by Pastor F.M. Riley

# You Cannot Burn a Pearl...

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*“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when He had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that He had, and bought it,” Matthew 13:45-46.*

## Introduction

In this study I want to examine the Biblical significance of pearls, and their relation to prophetic truth. I invite our readers to join us for an enlightening study.

## Biblical Jewels

The first mention of jewels in God’s Word is found in **Genesis 2:11-12**. The setting was before Adam and Eve had been expelled from Eden. This tells us that jewels have been an item of interest from the dawn of human history. There are 60 references in God’s Word to 20 different jewels as recorded in 16 books of the Bible. So jewels and jewelry are repeatedly mentioned in God’s Word.

All of the jewels mentioned in the Bible are used to symbolize something else mentioned in the Scriptures. Beyond the Scriptures, men have also assigned symbolic meanings to various jewels. Therefore jewels are highly symbolic. For example...

Each of the jewels set in the breastplate of the Jewish High Priest symbolized one of the twelve tribes of Israel, **Exodus 28:15-21**. The **diamond** is used to symbolize a writing instrument in **Jeremiah 17:1**. The **emerald** is used to symbolize the rainbow around God’s throne in **Revelation 4:3**. Several different jewels are used when speaking of the Lord Himself in the **Song of Solomon 5:10-16**. The **sapphire** is used to symbolize the foundations of Jerusalem during the future Millennial Kingdom, **Isaiah 54:11**. Wisdom is said to be more precious than **rubies** in **Proverbs 3:13-15** and **8:11**. The *“lips of knowledge”* are valued above **gold** and **rubies** in **Proverbs 20:15**. And in **Proverbs 31:10** *“a virtuous woman”* is valued *“far above rubies.”*

What serious Bible student could overlook the symbolism of the **jasper**? The jasper is actually called the *“bloodstone”* in some dictionaries, encyclopedias, and jewelers manuals. The finest quality jaspers are a beautiful blood red. The blood is exactly what the jasper symbolizes; the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. In **Revelation 21:18** the wall around New Jerusalem is made of jasper. In **Revelation 21:19** the first foundation underlying the city is made of jasper. In **Revelation 21:11** the light that emanates from the city is *“like a jasper stone;”* that is, it is blood red.

In other words, that which is typical of the blood of Christ under girds the city, surrounds the city, and is above the city. Everyone who enters New Jerusalem will be for ever reminded that they do so only by the precious blood of Christ. Glory! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

It is also significant that all of the jewels mentioned in God's Word are ultimately connected with New Jerusalem, ***Revelation 21:18-20***.

In God's Word jewels are associated with God the Father, with the Lord Jesus Christ, with angels, with men, and sadly, even with Satan.

All of these facts about jewels are interesting, and are deserving of more careful Bible study. But in this study I want to point out that all of the jewels I have mentioned thus far are **rocks or stones** that are dug from the earth. Such jewels were formed by heat and pressure and chemical reactions taking place in the bowels of the earth in ancient times.

However, there is another jewel in God's Word which I have not yet mentioned...

### **The Pearl**

A pearl is not a stone, rock, or even a mineral. A pearl does not originate in the bowels of the earth like other jewels. Yet a pearl is considered to be "a jewel." But oh what a jewel! A pearl is the most unique of all jewels. Now I want to point out just how different a pearl is from all other jewels.

### **The Birthplace of a Pearl**

The origin of a pearl begins in the body of an oyster. Any reader familiar with oysters knows that an oyster is a lowly sea creature. Any reader familiar with God's Word should know that the sea symbolizes ***"...peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues," Revelation 17:15***. See also ***Isaiah 17:12-13*** and ***57:20***. Keep this fact in mind as we continue our study.

The **exterior shell** of an oyster is often rough, dark, and ugly. There is nothing about the exterior appearance of an oyster that would make it desirable to anyone. Compare this fact with ***Isaiah 53:2*** where the human appearance of the Lord is being discussed, ***".....He hath no form nor comlieness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him."***

But the **interior shell** of an oyster is a different matter. The interior is beautiful white ivory without a blemish in it. When the interior shell of an oyster is held up to the light and slowly turned, every color of the rainbow will be reflected in the shell. Is there a reason for this? Think about it!

In *Psalm 45:8* the inspired Psalmist speaks of the sweet smell of the “*garments*” of the Lord [see the context] flowing forth from “*the ivory palaces*” in Heaven. Didn’t the Lord Himself say that He came down from Heaven? You know that He did. See *John 3:13*. In the *Song of Solomon 5:14*, we read this description of the Lord, “*His hands are as gold rings set with beryl: His belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.*” Praise the Lord!

Now look at **the body** of the oyster. An oyster’s body is pure white without a blemish in it. Read *Matthew 27:23-24*, *Luke 23:22*, *John 18:38*, *Hebrews 7:25-27*, *1 Peter 1:18-20*, and *1 John 1:5*.

Just as an oyster is one of the lowliest of sea creatures dwelling at the bottom of the sea, so the Lord Jesus Christ came into this “sea of humanity” and lived among the poor of this world as the humble lowly Son of man. He wasn’t born in a palace with nobility, but rather in a stable with lowly animals. He grew up in the home of a poor humble carpenter, and had as His companions poor men and women until the day He was crucified. He never sought prestige, or riches, or political position, but only to do the will of His Father in Heaven. And He lived a pure, holy, sinless life; a life with spot or blemish. Do you begin to see a type of Christ here? We will develop this further as we study.

### **The Forming of a Pearl**

A pearl is not a stone dug from the ground, but rather is an object made of living organic matter, which originates in the body of an oyster.

Just as the physical birth of a baby begins when a “seed” [*sperm*] is planted in the womb of a woman, so the process of forming a pearl begins when a tiny speck of foreign matter [*a grain of sand; a tiny pebble; a speck of dust*] becomes lodged in the shell of an oyster.

The tiny grain of matter stuck inside the oyster’s shell causes irritation and pain to the body of the oyster. The oyster, having no hands, cannot remove the cause of the pain. So what is the oyster to do to alleviate the pain in its body? The oyster wraps the source of the pain with living tissue from its own body. That helps to ease the pain, but it doesn’t totally eliminate it. So the oyster wraps more living tissue from its own body around that foreign object. As time passes, and the irritation continues, layer after layer of living tissue is wrapped around the source of the pain. While each layer of tissue eases the pain temporarily, the object grows larger and larger from the tissue being wrapped around it. The pearl being formed then gradually becomes a part of the very body of the oyster. It also grows harder, for as time passes the living tissue wrapped around the object hardens. A pearl is being formed by the oyster himself as he struggles to alleviate the pain in his side.

## The Source of the Pain

In the *Book of Genesis* we are told about the creation of the human race. In *Genesis 2:7* the Scripture states, ***“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”*** Adam’s body was made of the ***“dust”*** of the ground.

After God had created Adam, the Scriptures tell us that the Lord caused a deep sleep to come upon Adam, *Genesis 2:21-22*. The Lord then opened Adam’s side and removed one of Adam’s ribs. Out of Adam’s own rib and living tissue, the Lord then created a bride for Adam. This is why Adam said, ***“.....This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man,” 2:23.***

Adam is a type of Christ. This fact is often overlooked by even many of God’s people, yet it is indisputable if one truly believes the Scriptures. In *Romans 5:14* the inspired Apostle wrote, ***“Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of Him that was to come.”*** Glory!

In *Genesis 3:19* the Lord, in speaking to and about Adam, plainly states, ***“.....for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”***

In *Genesis 18:27* Abraham, in pleading for the souls in Sodom [*Lot and his family*], bowed before the Lord and humbly confessed, ***“...Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes:...”***

I could present several more Scriptures for our readers to emphasize the fact that mankind upon the earth is but ***“dust.”*** But I want to sum up this point with *Psalms 103:13-18*, ***“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children’s children; to such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them.”***

Folks, this passage tells us again that man upon the earth is only ***“dust,”*** and that as the winds blow over the fields man passes back into the ***“dust”*** from whence he came. But it also tells us that the God of Heaven is filled with pity for those who ***“fear Him,”*** and that His mercy is ***“upon them that fear Him...”*** Praise the Lord!

## The Heart of God

Some of our readers may be wondering what this has to do with oysters and pearls. So let's find out...

Just as a grain of *"dust"* lodges in the side of an oyster, so fallen man lodged in the heart of the Creator. Almighty God, who knows the end from the beginning, foresaw the fall of man even before the foundation of the world and devised a way of redemption, ***Ephesians 1:3-6***. When Adam sinned, it pained the very heart of God. Remember, the Scripture says, ***"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins," 1 John 4:10***. Again, in ***1 John 4:19*** we read, ***"We love Him, because He first loved us."*** The Lord Himself told His disciples, ***"Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you....," John 15:16***. Folks, it is not fallen man that goes seeking after God. Rather, it is God that reaches down to fallen man and makes mankind aware that a way of salvation has been provided by God Himself. Praise the Lord! Glory!

Just as an oyster seeks to ease the pain in his side, so the Scripture says of the Lord Jesus Christ,

***"But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd," Matthew 9:36***. In ***Matthew 11:28*** the Lord then said, ***"Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."*** It is obvious that the lost condition of fallen humanity was a source of pain to the Lord. Right there the Lord began to extend His love and mercy to *"all"* that would come to Him; Jew or Gentile.

## Solution to the Pain

Just as an oyster covers the source of the pain with his own living tissue, so the Lord Jesus Christ covers the sin of all who come to Him and cares for them even as His own body.

In ***John 17:6-12*** the Lord said, ***"I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy Word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given me are of Thee. For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou has given Me, for they are Thine. And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be***

*one, as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name: those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled."*

## **Growth of a Pearl**

Just as a pearl grows within the body of an oyster, so the Lord built His church from those living souls who had come to Him.

In **Matthew 16:13-20** the Lord is specifically speaking to His disciples. In verses **17-19** the Lord said, *".....Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter [petros...a little pebble], and upon this rock [petra...a great immoveable boulder] I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*

With that little band of believers who had come to Him, the Lord began to build His church. He did not build it upon them, but rather upon Himself. **1 Corinthians 10:4** explicitly states, *".....and that Rock was Christ."* Again, in **Ephesians 3:20**, the inspired Apostle when speaking of the Lord's church explicitly states, *"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone;....."*

## **The Body of Christ**

Just as an oyster wraps layer after layer of his own living tissue around the pearl until it becomes a part of his own body, so the Lord made His church, composed of living souls, a part of His own body.

In **Romans 12:1-2** we who have come to Christ are exhorted to present our bodies as living sacrifices unto the Lord. Then in **12:4-5** it is explicitly stated, *"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."*

In the New Testament there are many other Scriptures that refer to true believers as being a part of *"the body of Christ."* But in **1 Corinthians 12:27** it is specifically stated, *"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."* And in **Ephesians 1:22-23** the Lord's church is clearly identified as being *"the body of Christ."*

*"...And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all."*

This truth is repeated in **Colossians 1:18** and **1:24**. Just as a pearl is taken into the body of an oyster, so the Lord's church has been taken into **"the body of Christ."** Glory! Praise the Lord!

### **The Birth of a Pearl**

Then one day, just as a baby is brought forth from the womb by a doctor or midwife, so a diver seeking pearls lifts up the oyster from the bottom of the sea and takes it above. Once the oyster has been lifted up, the oyster is killed as the pearl is brought forth from the body of the oyster. The oyster has to die in order for the pearl to be born. Since the oyster lives in the sea, it is worth noting that the pearl is **"born of water,"** even as a baby is born. This doesn't have to be explained to any woman who has ever given birth. Nevertheless see **Job 38:8** and **John 3:5**.

Just as an oyster has to die in order for the pearl to be brought forth from his body, so our precious Lord had to die in order to bring forth His church.

***"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood," Acts 20:28.***

***"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as a Lamb without blemish and without spot:...", 1 Peter 1:18-19.***

Before the Lord was to die upon the cruel cross, He met with His disciples and gave to them the New Covenant. When the Lord gave the New Covenant to His disciples at the last supper, it was just a document without any "legal" authority, yet it was a "legal document." In order to give that document legal authority the Lord had to die. This is plainly stated in **Hebrews 9:13-17**, ***"For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause He is the mediator of the new testament [covenant], that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament [covenant], they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament [covenant] is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament [covenant] is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength [authority] at all while the testator liveth."***

This makes it very clear that the New Covenant went into force only after Christ died on the cross. This truth is further stated in **Colossians 2:14**, ***"Blotting out the***

***handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross."***

Folks, the redemption of all who would believe was bound up in the death of Christ, but also the authority for the Lord's church to function as the Lord's "legally appointed" spiritual representative on this earth during this present dispensation of grace. I

n plain words, it required the death of Christ to redeem fallen man, to put the New Covenant into force, and to bring forth His church, just as it requires the death of an oyster to bring forth a pearl. Glory! Praise the Lord!

### **The Symbolism of the Pearl**

In this study I have repeatedly compared a pearl to the Lord's church. That is because the comparison is entirely Scriptural. The parable of "*The Pearl of Great Price*" in ***Matthew 13:45-46*** was given to teach God's people how much the Lord loves and values His church.

This parable tells us that the "***merchant man***" came "***seeking goodly pearls,***" just as the Father sent His Son into this world to seek out a people for Himself, ***Luke 1:17***.

When Christ came into this world, there were many "pearls" to be found. But most were "cultured" pearls. Cultured pearls are pearls in which man has interfered with the process, and although this process may produce beautiful pearls [*organizations with high moral standards*], it is still a process that has been tampered with by fallen man. There were also many "defective" pearls. This speaks of *false religious systems* that men have established in opposition to the truth of God's Word. It covers all of the false man made religions in the world. But Christ didn't settle for any of these "counterfeits." He was looking for the real thing.

The parable tells us that the "***merchant man***" [*the Lord*] found "***one pearl of great price.***" This expression in the Greek text means that the pearl was "priceless." It was so valuable that no monetary value could be attached to it.

Then we are told in the parable that when He had found this priceless pearl, he "***went and sold all that He had, and bought it.***" Folks, all that Christ had was Himself. He owned no earthly possessions. Therefore He literally gave Himself to purchase "***the pearl of great price***" [*His church*] to be His own possession.

When speaking to the Lord's church, the inspired Word clearly states, "***What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's,***" ***1 Corinthians 6:19-20.***

***"Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men," 1 Corinthians 7:23.***

Folks, the ***"pearl of great price"*** typifies the Lord's own blood bought church. Glory!

### **The Prophetic Symbolism**

This truth is further established when we compare ***John 14*** with ***Revelation 21***. In ***John 14:1-3***, the Lord, speaking to His disciples said, ***"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."***

In this passage is a spiritual picture of the Jewish bridegroom speaking to his prospective bride. He promises her that he is going to prepare a special place for her, and assures her that she can trust him to return for her and take her to that special place that he has prepared. Surely our readers can see the Lord's relationship to His prospective bride, His church, in this passage.

Then in ***Revelation 21:2*** the beloved John is shown ***".....the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."*** When you study the description of New Jerusalem that follows, you should notice that the ***"bride"*** is wearing a string of pearls which serve as the 12 gates into the city. Glory! Glory to God! Hallelujah! Praise to the Lamb!

### **Christ's Love for His Church**

Folks, the Lord's church is the ***"the pearl of great price,"*** and it was taken out of the side of our Lord, even as a pearl is taken out of the side of an oyster. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself died to purchase His church, even as an oyster has to die in order to bring forth a pearl. Glory to God!

***"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," Romans 5:7-8.***

How very much the Lord loves His redeemed saints.

***"As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep," John 10:15.***

***"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends," John 15:13.***

These verses tell us how very much the Lord loves His church, for His church is also His *"espoused"* bride.

In **2 Corinthians 11:2** the inspired Apostle plainly stated to the Lord's church, ***"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."***

### **The Jewish Wedding**

In the Jewish courtship in Biblical times, it was a custom for the prospective groom to offer to his prospective bride a cup of "wine." If the prospective bride accepted the cup and drank the wine she was consenting to become the man's wife. From that time forward they were then *"espoused" [engaged]* to one another. The prospective groom would then leave his *"espoused"* bride, departing back to his own home [*his father's house*], where he would build a house [*"prepare a place"*] for his *"espoused"* bride. The building of the house was customarily supervised by the groom's father. With the primitive equipment of that time, it might take two years [*2000 years?*] or more to complete the house. When the father stamped his approval on what the son had built, then the son left the father's house and came back to take his *"espoused"* bride to himself to become his wife.

Folks, surely every true believer can see the wonderful type of Christ and His *"espoused"* bride; His church, in this Jewish wedding custom.

Some 2,000 years ago at the Lord's Supper, the Lord offered His church a cup containing *"the fruit of the vine,"* and ask His church to *".....Drink ye all of it....,"* **Matthew 26:26-29**. The disciples, who represented the church of the Lord Jesus Christ [**1 Corinthians 12:27-28; Ephesians 2:20**] accepted the cup and drank it, signifying that they were *"espousing"* themselves to the Lord to be His future "Heavenly Bride." Glory! Glory to God! Praise the Lord! Hallelujah!

### **The Future Fulfillment**

Just as the Lord promised His church in **John 14:1-3**, He is coming again to take His church [*"the pearl of great price"*] to Himself. This is clearly prophesied in **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 1 Corinthians 15:50-58, Galatians 1:4, Philippians 3:20-21, Colossians 3:1-4, 1 John 3:1-3, Revelation 3:8 & 3:10**, and other passages that don't come to mind at this precise moment. Glory! Hallelujah!

### **Summary**

In this study thus far, I have called our reader's attention to the various jewels mentioned in God's Word. All of these jewels are stones dug from the earth, with one exception.....a pearl.

I have also pointed out the unique difference between other jewels and a pearl. To my knowledge a pearl is the only jewel not dug from the earth. Rather a pearl is a jewel composed of organic matter which comes from the living tissue of an oyster.

I have pointed out that the ***“pearl of great price”*** is a type of the Lord’s church, both here on earth and in the ***“prepared place”*** in the future New Jerusalem.

Now having pointed out these truths to our readers, I want to point out one last wonderful truth on this subject for the spiritual benefit of our readers. Stay with me just a little longer.

## Conclusion

Folks, all of the other jewels mentioned in God’s Word are stones dug from the bowels of the earth. As such they can be cast into fire, and it will do them no harm. The fire will not burn them up. Rather, the fire will only burn the dross off of them. When these jewels are brought forth from the fire, they will gleam brighter than ever before because they have been “purified” by fire.

I urge every reader to now study the prophecies dealing with “Israel.” Israel is the people and nation that is to be cast into the “fires” of the Tribulation. There the “dross” will be burned from them, and they will come forth as a “pure” people, holy unto the Lord. Study such passages as ***Ezekiel 22:18-22, Isaiah 1:24-25, Malachi 3:1-3, Zechariah 13:8-9***, and other related passages.

But what is true of Israel is not true of the Lord’s church. The Lord’s church is not “purified” by fire, but rather by ***“.....the washing of water by the Word. That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish,” Ephesians 5:25-27.*** Folks, the Lord’s church is cleansed by the words of the Lord Jesus Christ as given in the New Testament [*Covenant*], ***John 15:3.***

There are even some of God’s people [*true believers*] today, who seem obsessed with having the “church” go through part of the Tribulation to “purify it” before it is caught up to meet the Lord at the rapture. Folks, such a false teaching is both Scripturally [*spiritually*] and physically impossible! Why? Because the Lord’s church is symbolized by the ***“pearl of great price.”***

Folks, A pearl is not like other jewels, which are stones dug from the earth. A pearl is composed of organic matter. It is the most unique of all jewels, for it is created from the living tissue of the oyster. To cast a pearl into fire would mean the total end of its existence, for it would immediately catch fire and burn itself out of existence.

If my readers get nothing else out of this study, please remember this.....

**You cannot burn a pearl!**

*And therefore.....*

**You cannot cast the Lord's church into the fires of the Tribulation!**

*Glory! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Glory to God!*

### **The Lord's Promise to His Church**

***"Because thou hast kept the Word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth," Revelation 3:10.***



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