

Repentance & Baptism

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[0 : 0 0] I think that was wonderful there to hear the women sing. It reminded me, we've just finished the book of Ruth, and it reminded me of the women of the neighborhood who were welcoming Ruth and praising God at the end of the book.

You know, what a wonderful thing. So what a wonderful sound. He's all sounded in tune, in harmony. It must be the men who are putting it out. But in all seriousness, it actually made me ponder, you know, in the book of Genesis, right?

And I don't know if you've ever heard anything about this, but when Eve tells her husband to eat of the fruit, and she gets a hard time for it forevermore, you know, don't listen to women.

Don't listen to your wife. When humans are fallen in their nature, we say things that often ought not be listened to.

You know, and that's an example. It's not unique to women. It's a human thing. But there's an example in Genesis of a fallen human saying something that perhaps shouldn't be listened to.

[1 : 2 9] Now, one of the wonderful things I think is evident in the New Testament and was scandalous, was unheard of in its time, was the place of women in the church and in the economy of God's purposes.

And that throughout the New Testament, time and time again, how God uses a redeemed woman and how people ought to listen to redeemed women, the place they have in church and in this world.

What a wonderful thing it is to hear someone praising God. And so, yeah, it's a wonderful thing to see that contrast, that when you are redeemed, and especially in the New Testament, you see that women were used and ought to be listened to, the first to reveal Christ's resurrection.

Wonderful things. And you get examples like Timothy with his mother and his grandmother. So keep praising God and keep giving wisdom to those of us who need it, especially us men.

Anyway, this morning, we have finished the book of Ruth. This morning, we're going to be in Acts chapter 2. We're going to spend a couple of weeks there looking at how people are redeemed in Christ and what that looks like, how that happens, and see a bit of a bridge from Ruth into that.

[2 : 5 4] So we're in Acts chapter 2. And I'm going to read from verse 21 to 41. I'm trusting that you know the context of Acts.

We spent two years in Acts from 2020 to 2022. And so it's Pentecost.

It's the Pentecost after the Passover where Christ died. It's the Pentecost 10 days after Christ has ascended. It's the Pentecost, which is a few days after Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would come.

It's the Pentecost when the disciples began to speak in languages as the Spirit came and filled them. And so Peter responds to the perplexion of the people and also the mocking of some of the other people.

There are hundreds of thousands of Jews in the city. It was one of three feasts in the Jewish calendar where they were commanded to return to Jerusalem.

[4 : 04] So there's hundreds of thousands of Jews. And Peter preaches this sermon. And he says, what you are seeing is what was spoken by the prophet Joel. And then he tells of the Spirit's work as prophesied by Joel.

But he doesn't just talk of the Spirit. He talks of the Lord. And at the end, we will see that he quotes Joel talking about Yahweh, anyone who calls upon the name of Yahweh.

But what Joel is pointing towards and what Peter is claiming is that that is applicable to Jesus. And so let me read from Acts 2.21.

The end of Joel says, it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

And then Peter says, men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst as you yourselves know.

[5 : 12] this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it. For David says concerning him, I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.

Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced. My flesh also will dwell in hope, for you will not abandon my soul to Hades or let your Holy One see corruption.

You have made known to me the paths of life. You will make me full of gladness with your presence. And Peter says, Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried and his tomb is with us to this day.

Being therefore a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades nor did his flesh see corruption.

[6 : 29] This is Jesus God raised up and of that we are all witnesses. Being there exalted at the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he, Jesus, has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool. Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brothers, what shall we do? And Peter said to them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself. And with many other words, he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation.

So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about 3,000 souls. Amen. Lord, may you bless your word to us as it is read and heard.

- [8 : 08] So, as we bridge from Ruth into the New Testament, into Christ, we see that Peter's call for these wayward and wandering disciples, wandering Israelites, fellow Jews, his call is for them to first repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus.
- Now, many of you might remember this story because I told it a couple of years ago when we were in Acts chapter 19.
- If you've heard it, then bear with me. I think it's a fitting illustration. Some of you weren't around and might not have heard the story. But when me and Jen got married on the 17th of June, 2011, our anniversary in a few days' time, the day after, no, it's the day of, the ladies' fellowship, yeah?
- It's a good day. I was saying that to you, weren't I? 17th of June, 2011, 13 years ago, we set off on the next day, it was a Friday, we set off on the Saturday to the Isle of Skye for our honeymoon, the Inner Hebrides.
- And we were young, a bit like yourselves, although probably with less sense of direction. we hadn't driven very far ourselves and we were just enjoying the views.
- [9 : 36] And Jen's brother had provided us with his Garmin sat-nav to help us get there. Just put in the address, follow it, and you'll get there. What are you putting your faith in?
- So we had put our faith in this sat-nav and we had to repent. You see, when Peter spoke about Jesus in Pentecost, who Jesus really was and what they did to him, yet how God raised him and exalted him, thousands of his fellow Jews were cut to the heart.
- It was a big blow to them. Sometimes people only see the work of the Holy Spirit at the start with all this speaking in languages. But remember John 16, where Jesus says, when the Holy Spirit comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.
- Concerning sin because they do not believe in me. So the Holy Spirit in Acts chapter 2 is convicting these people with the words of Peter and the words of Joel.
- The Holy Spirit is convicting these people to the point that they're cut to the heart. Realizing they had rejected their Messiah, they earnestly asked Peter and the apostles, brothers, what shall we do?
- [10 : 55] We are doomed. Surely, we've killed the Messiah. Peter says, well, repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of such things and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- What a deal. They don't deserve that. None of us deserve that. even after rejecting and killing their Messiah, they would still be given a chance to turn back.
- And he would forgive them. Jesus would forgive those who crucified him. We've all crucified him by our sin. And he would forgive us and welcome us.
- But, he wasn't helpless in that scenario. It would never have happened if he hadn't purposefully and voluntarily laid down his own life freely of his own will.
- In the book of Ruth, you would have seen that Naomi's life is a picture of Israel as a whole at that time. She left the promised land and moved to Moab looking for life away from God.
- [12 : 11] She had to repent. She had to turn back. And we see this and I'm thankful for David bringing us out in our Bible study on Wednesday night that the word return is used around 12 times in the first chapter of Ruth.
- It's a big theme. And in Hebrew, that's repent. That's the word for repent. It's the same meaning. And so, Naomi is a picture of the whole nation of Israel.
- Israel must return to Yahweh. And so, to repent is to turn around, to turn back. So, yeah, me and Jen had put our faith in that sat-nav and we had to repent.

We had to turn back. I'm sure many of you had a similar experience of going down a wrong road. But for some reason, if you've ever been to Sky, you'll know this, for some reason, the sat-nav didn't know that there was a bridge to Sky.

What on earth? I mean, it came, it was built in 1995. I don't get it. So, but we didn't realize that the sat-nav didn't know this until we arrived at Malague at the ferry crossing that we'd not planned to go to.

[13 : 25] And it was, oh, it was such a long way back. You see, other options, other options often seem easier than repenting, than turning around.

So, you know, we thought to ourselves, well, we're here now, we may as well get the ferry. Other options will seem easier than repenting in life. Sometimes people think they're far too, far down the track to turn back.

But you're never too far. Look at Naomi. Too far. And Moab, her husband and her two sons are dead. Too far to return.

God has dealt with me bitterly. There's no returning from this. But that's not true. Even if it's a long way back, there is an opportunity to turn around if you're still breathing.

So, sometimes, other options, sometimes, it will seem easier not to turn around. And me and Jen thought, well, we're here already.

[14 : 27] It's a long way back. Let's just get the ferry. So, I chased down a guy that looked like he worked for the ferry company. And I said, excuse me, sir, when is the last, when's the next ferry to Skye?

And he turned around and he pointed at the one leaving in the distance and he said, that's the last one. Sorry, mate. This is the Jews in Acts 2.

What shall we do? We had to repent. We were at a dead end and we had to turn around. You see, the thing is, perhaps in life, many people hear that message, repent, when they're still on the journey to Malague and they think they're going to get there and they don't realise it's going to be a dead end and there's not a ferry waiting for you.

We tried to find an alternative route on the Satnav. Honestly, I don't know, just don't choose Garmin, right? It suggested that we go to Ullapool and get another ferry from up there.

I don't know why it didn't know there was a sky bridge. Maybe it was trying to purposefully, I don't know. There are many things in the world that claim to know the way but they only lead us to dead ends.

[15 : 49] And that Satnav was an example of that. Claiming to know the way and it just was only sending us to the wrong places that would never get us there. Even things that seem religious and virtuous, unless they point to the bridge, they cannot get you there in the end.

There's a sea between us and where we need to be. There are many things in this world that promise to get us there but cannot bridge the gap. We need a bridge. And so there we were, me and Jen and my leg at a dead end with no work in Satnav now, no ferry.

We didn't know what to do. And as we look at repentance and baptism, we could have gone for the baptism option and just driven into the sea. You can see sky from the lake.

But perhaps it's a theological point to say that from a baptistic conviction, repentance always precedes baptism. So for us, it was around 6pm, we knew we had to turn around.

We had to just turn around. But we didn't know how to get there. We didn't know the way. We need a road map. This is what it's like in the world. This is what Jesus said, that without him you're stumbling about in the dark.

[17 : 06] We need a road map. It's one thing to realise that your direction is leading to a dead end. It's one thing to see that and to turn around. But it's another thing to know the way.

You need to know the way. Now thankfully, there was a car sitting in this random car park next to us and there just happened to be a man returning from a walk and we went up to him and said, please help.

And we told him our predicament and he had a paper map in his car. Old school, it's the best way and he was so gracious he gave us his map and he says, here, look, there you go, just follow that and you'll get to the bridge.

And we got there. Brothers, what shall we do? Said the Jews who realised they went the wrong way. Thankfully, the man gave us the map so that we could get to the bridge and thankfully, Peter gave his fellow Jews a road map when they were called to turn around.

He didn't just say turn around. He gave them a road map. He gave them the gospel, Jesus Christ. So, again, I don't know what was wrong with this sat-nav.

[18 : 17] It should have known there was a bridge. But all roads don't lead to heaven. There's only one road that leads to sky. There's only one bridge that will get you across. You see what I'm saying?

Jesus is the bridge that we need and the gospel is the road map that we need to find the bridge. But we need to turn around. We need to repent to get there because all other ways just lead to a dead end.

Many sat-navs in the world promising to offer you truth that just lead to a dead end with a sea between us. Perhaps the sat-nav did know there was a bridge and was trying to avoid it purposefully.

There are things in life that are like that. Anything but Jesus. Anything. Anything but Malay, but the bridge. Go to Malay.

Go to Ullapu. Just don't go to the bridge. It sounds silly, but I bet you would be more suspicious if it was Google Maps or Apple Maps or purposefully trying to send you the wrong way.

[19 : 26] Our sat-nav that day was like all the false religions or false narratives or half-truths or lies that there are out there. It can only take you so far.

In fact, the problem is they don't even really take us halfway. They take us out of the way. They put us out of the way. They put us in a position where we have to travel farther to get back. We had to turn around at that point and it added about a hundred miles onto our journey.

Many of the Jews in Acts chapter 2 were in town to worship God, the true God, and they thought they were worshipping God all the while they were rejecting his son.

They thought they were close. It's like they were standing at my leg looking at sky, waiting for a ferry that's never coming, all the while rejecting the bridge that God provided as a way.

They had to turn around. They had to accept that the bridge was the only way and it was the true way. We all need to turn around. I like that when Levi asked do we need to choose a way?

[20 : 34] We need to choose to turn around because we've already all chosen a way. We're all on that road, that wide road that leads to destruction. Paul says this in Romans chapter 3, no one is righteous, no one seeks God, no one does good.

No matter who we are, we all need to turn around from our course. We all need a change of direction. Our human nature as a compass was always leading us away from God.

Our fallen humanity was actually always leading us away from true humanity. As the prophet Isaiah says, all of us like sheep have strayed away.

We have left God's path to follow our own, yet the Lord laid on Christ the sins of us all. So turning back, whether in the Old Testament or New Testament, turning back was always the message.

But we need to know not only what we're turning away from, we need to know what we're turning to. And so Peter tells his fellow Jews to turn back, but he's already told them that what they need to turn back from is rejecting Christ.

[21 : 40] They've rejected Christ. And they need to turn around from that. They need to repent of their rejection of Jesus as their Messiah. Turning away from their rejection and turning to him as the only one who can forgive your sins and give you life.

And that's why he quotes not just the first part of Joel about the Holy Spirit, but he quotes Joel saying, everyone who calls upon the name of Yahweh will be saved. And what Peter is saying is that calling on the name of Jesus Christ is calling on the name of Yahweh.

They're one and the same thing. Only by calling on the name of Jesus will you be saved. It's like when Jesus came claiming to be their Messiah, their bridge to sky.

They rejected him and they were content to wait in my leg for a ferry that is another Messiah who's never coming. Many Jews today are still there, still waiting, still rejecting Jesus and waiting for a ferry that's never coming.

refusing to go to the bridge, waiting in my leg for a Messiah ferry that's never going to come because God already gave them a bridge in Jesus. So when Peter tells him to repent, it's like saying, would you stop rejecting the only way?

[23 : 00] Turn around from rejecting the only way. There's no other ferry coming. You need to turn around and go to the bridge. It's the only way. Does that make sense?

I'm just rambling. Our nature doesn't naturally lead us the right way. We are not neutral and because of that we need to turn back.

And unless we know the way, we will continually find ourselves going down all sorts of dead ends, whether it's Malague or Ullapul, whatever it is in life.

If it's not Jesus, it's the wrong way. Again, in Acts chapter 3, Peter says to his fellow Jews, repent and turn back that your sins may be blotted out. And at the end of Acts chapter 3, Peter refers to God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 22 that through Abraham's offspring, all the families of the earth would be blessed.

And Peter says that the offspring God is talking about is Jesus. And the way that all the families are blessed, end of Acts chapter 3, in Peter's words is to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.

[24 : 13] What a blessing it is to be turned from our propensity towards wickedness. What a blessing that is, isn't it? Such a blessing.

If you're here this morning and you know Jesus and you've felt that, you know that your heart is continually bent towards destruction. And yet God has graciously blessed us to turn us away from it and forgive us in Christ.

It's not only a blessing when you see where you were heading, it's a blessing to see where you're going when you turn around and follow Christ. To perishing is where you were going.

Eternal life is where you've been turned around to. And that's what John 3, 16 is all about. God loved the world in such a way that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not continue on the path towards perishing but by believing in Jesus should be turned around to have eternal life.

Thank you, Jesus. So repentance, we hear that word, it's a word that perhaps many people don't like. Partly, I think, because many people don't understand how good repentance is.

[25 : 30] It's so good people don't realize that they're on a road that's heading towards a cliff. And if they don't turn back, they're going to drive off and crash into the sea.

Repentance is turning back from that road, turning towards the bridge that can get you across the sea. I think that's partly why people don't like the word repentant because they don't realize that's what it means.

But also, I honestly think partly one of the reasons is because people don't want to turn back. People don't want to turn away from their pet sins.

Either not knowing that it's destroying them or not caring about the consequences because we live in a world of fleeting pleasures now, pay later.

As long as I can get now, I'll pay later. Repentance is good news. It's the chance to change direction when we should actually be judged already.

[26 : 27] God is so patient, not willing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. And that change of direction, God even says through Ezekiel, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live.

we only get a chance to change direction because God is merciful and kind. Romans 2, Paul says, God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance.

Why are we not struck down already for the things that we do? Why are we not struck down? Because God is so kind and His kindness is leading us to turn around so that we find life.

God is patient and kind. He wants us to turn around rather than perish and so He sends His only Son, Jesus, to take our place, to die our death.

He has served our just desserts. He bears our sin so that His righteousness can be given to us if only we'll turn back. Yet here's the thing, even for the Christian, and you all know this, even for those of us who've found the bridge and traversed it, we know that Jesus is the only way.

[27 : 52] There is a daily temptation to follow other directions. There's a daily wandering to toy about with my leg with this sat-nav. Oh, maybe this will lead me somewhere interesting.

A daily temptation to go back the way we came, even although we know that it leads to a dead end. So if we believe we ought to live in light of our repentance and baptism, it's not just we did that, we ticked that box and now we move on.

We live in light of it. We live as a people turned around. That's our identity. We are a people who have been turned around, a people who have been baptized.

If we believe we ought to live in light of this, we have turned back. So we ought not look back but press on.

We have gone through the water so we should live not like we are still slaves but like we are free in Christ. And so when Peter tells them to be baptized, this is what baptism is.

[29 : 02] And we've seen this. We've been in Exodus. And if you've been around for that, you've seen in Exodus that the nation of Israel were slaves in Egypt. They were needed and rescued.

And even when they were released, they were brought to the edge of a sea, a sea in front of them, an army behind them. They're going to die. For them, it wasn't a ferry.

For them, it wasn't a bridge. God made a way through the water. Now Jesus is the bridge to life. But that was only possible through his death, wasn't it?

And in Exodus, going through the water is like going through death. God led them through the sea. They went through death into life when they came out the other side.

And that is what baptism was about, in and out the other side. In Exodus, they come out the other side, a free people, no longer slaves in Egypt. And likewise, when we repent, when we are baptized, like the Israelites, we were slaves, but we come through the water and are now free.

[30 : 08] And so this is what Paul talks about in Romans chapter 6, that we were slaves to sin. But when we turn to God and go through the waters of baptism, Romans 6, 2, says this, when you've been baptized into Christ Jesus, you've been baptized into his death.

We were buried with him in his baptism. We were buried with him by baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

The one who has died has been set free from sin. Now think of that, your baptism. We should live in light of our baptism. that if we have been turned around and gone through the waters, then we should no longer live as slaves to sin.

We are no longer slaves to sin. We are children of God. So do you see how your baptism is part of you coming out of slavery to sin, just like going through the Red Sea was to Israel coming out of slavery to Egypt?

When they came out of the other side, Egypt would never have a hold of them again. Never. Never again have a hold of them. And we need to remember that when we have been baptized, when we have believed and turned around, repented, and been baptized, sin will never have the same hold on us.

[31 : 41] We might sometimes act like it does, but that's why we're called to live as free people, because sin no longer enslaves us. Now, a question.

Did the Red Sea save Israel? I need to ask this question. Did the Red Sea save Israel? No. The Red Sea didn't save Israel.

The Red Sea was used by God to save Israel, but God saved Israel. God used the sea so that they would know that it is by grace alone, through faith alone, and Him alone.

they had to have faith, but it was by His grace and His power and Him alone who did it. Now, if they didn't go through the sea, Egypt would have caught them.

It was a real thing, but it wasn't the sea that saved them, it was God and His grace. And yet, they only went into the sea by trusting in God.

[32 : 55] So, I need to ask the question, does baptism save us? Well, no. It doesn't. But it is not separate from our salvation.

Just the same way that the Red Sea was not separate from Israel's salvation. salvation. The water doesn't save you. The act doesn't save you. You're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, and Christ alone.

Baptism isn't causative. It doesn't cause your salvation. Certainly the water itself. I was baptized in a straitling swimming pool. That water didn't save me. It was a nice pool, though.

We had a pool party afterwards. The water doesn't save you. The act isn't powerful in and of itself. But God saved us in this way.

If Jesus commands us to be baptized, it's because like the Israelites, we need to, in a sense, go through the waters. But it's not the water that saves us.

[34 : 00] It's Jesus. Yet the water represents his death, his burial, and his resurrection. Now, does that mean that a person who believes in Jesus but is not yet baptized, does that mean they're not saved?

No, it doesn't mean they're not saved. It doesn't. There are examples. You've got the man next to Jesus on the cross. You've got Cornelius who can withhold water when the Holy Spirit has been poured out on him.

But I don't think that's the point. This is the thing that I think we get mixed up in when we separate things out. That's not the point. We shouldn't separate things out. I don't think we're supposed to think of it in terms of stages.

It's all one thing. The whole thing is all one thing. For instance, if I were to ask you in the book of Exodus, when did the Exodus actually happen? Can you tell me?

Would it be incomplete to say it was at this point when they left the borders of Egypt? Would it be incomplete to say that it was when they came out of the Red Sea?

[35 : 07] It'd probably be incomplete to say any one of those things because it was the whole thing. I don't think we're supposed to view it in little stages and such. It's all of God and all of grace and it's all received only by trusting in Jesus.

Only by trusting in God. That is to say that if you have repented, if you have turned around, if you do earnestly believe in Jesus but you haven't been baptized, you're missing a pretty important part of that process.

It doesn't necessarily save you but it's part of your salvation. It's all part of it just like it was for the Israelites to go through the sea. So we ought not wait.

We ought to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus. Not that these things save us in and of themselves. But when Paul says in Romans 6 that our baptism into Christ unites us with Christ, why would you not want to be baptized and be united with his death and burial and resurrection?

Now, on the flip side, if you have repented and have been baptized, we ought to live in light of those things. They're not just an entry point or a box tick.

[36 : 25] They are our identity. Our identity as a turned around and freed people who have gone through the waters. So, believe, repent and be baptized.

I think, although Peter doesn't say believe at this point, it's implicit in his whole sermon that they have rejected Christ, therefore turn around and repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus.

That implies believing in Jesus now something that they didn't believe before. And baptism, baptism is believing in Jesus like the Israelites trusting in God to save them by going through the Red Sea.

We trust in Jesus to save us by going through the waters in a death, burial, and resurrection like his. baptism is the outward invisible act of a person trusting in Jesus which mirrors the inward and invisible act of the Spirit uniting us with Christ.

These things we are all responsible for to repent, to turn around, to be baptized, to believe in the name of Jesus Christ. Christ. And it says that those who received his word did so.

[37 : 51] Folks, there are many more things that we could say about these aspects of the Christian life. but suffice it to say this, we all need to turn around. Every one of us in the world is like me and Jen going to my leg and there's no ferry waiting for us.

We need to turn around and there's only one bridge and that is Jesus Christ. He can get us to the promised land. He can give us forgiveness that we need. He can give us life. All other roads lead to perishing.

And we only get there by turning around and by going through the waters and believing in Jesus Christ. And that is part of our identity. We should do that or we should live in light of that.

And it's a glorious and wonderful thing to remember that you are a turned around believer in Jesus going through the waters and heading towards life.

Hallelujah. We can only say that because God is gracious and merciful and kind and has given us this in Jesus Christ his son. Let me pray. Our Father and our God we thank you so much for your wonderful mercy and grace towards us in Jesus Christ.

[39 : 06] Your great love has been shown to us on the cross of Christ. And we thank you that while we deserve death and judgment you give us plentiful opportunity to turn around and you do it in such a kind way for your kindness is meant to lead us to repentance.

So please Lord would you help us know your goodness and kindness and know the goodness of repentance and know the life that there is in Christ.

We thank you in his name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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