

Chaos At The Lake

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[0 : 00] Well, the passage before us presents an early transition point in Mark's proclamation of Jesus's identity and purpose.

This section really serves as a means of moving the story along, and what Mark is doing is summarizing this early stage of Jesus's life.

Now, up to this point, Mark has introduced us to the early displays of power in Jesus's ministry, and he's also told us of the early reactions of the religious establishment to Jesus.

Now, he is beginning to transition away from this early season of ministry to the more dominant portion of Christ's ministry in Galilee.

The transition here, the reason we read both sections, is because it's really made up of two different events, two different scenes or episodes, whatever you'd want to call them. The first summarizes the nature of Jesus's meteoric rise in popularity, and it provides really a fitting close to this first section of the book.

[1 : 11] The second episode summarizes the calling of his twelve disciples, and it initiates the development of the next few chapters. So, in a literary sense, that's what's happening here in these verses.

These sections, they're not difficult. They're not complicated. They're actually useful to our understanding. They further validate Jesus's claims of divinity.

They show that Jesus had a purpose to achieve, as he calls his disciples and commissions them. They reveal the pressure that Jesus felt, how he relates to us as being human as well.

And then they remind us of the true nature of discipleship and what it actually means to be a follower of Christ and not just a part of the crowd.

And so, it's significant here. Let's take a moment to work through this first scene this morning. Look with me again at verse 7. But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea or to the lake.

[2 : 17] Now, this isn't the first time that Jesus has done this in the Gospel of Mark. You'll remember that in the first chapter, at the end, Jesus cleanses the leper. And because the leprous man disobeyed the Lord, he had to switch places with him.

The leper was now in the city. He was fine. He was healed. He could be around all the people. But Jesus was then forced to minister for a season in desert places. That was the result of the pressure that was put on him because of the crowds and really the leprous man's disobedience.

Then when we get to chapter 2, we see the healing of the paralytic. And after that, Jesus initiates a move to the lake. He himself decides that he's going to go out in order to accommodate the crowds.

And then when we come to this part in chapter 3, it's really a mixture of both of those things. It's the plotting of the Pharisees from verse 6. That's where we left off last week. Look at it again. And the Pharisees went forth and immediately took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

So Jesus is in the city, maybe Capernaum. And he's in Capernaum. He's teaching in the synagogue. And now the Pharisees are ticked off again. And they go and they consult with their political enemies to see if they can find a way to, quote-unquote, legally murder Jesus.

[3 : 35] And so Jesus, sensing that, is moving out of the city a little bit. He's getting away from the Pharisees to an extent. That's happening here. But there's also this fact of these growing crowds that are initiating Jesus' move.

He is initiating that more than he's running from any type of opposition. And we're immediately reminded again of the unstoppable nature of Jesus' purpose.

No matter what confronted him, no matter what circumstances he found himself in, Jesus was committed to faithfully fulfilling his task, his ministry.

He was faithfully seeking to preach the gospel. He wanted to heal the people. He was on his way to the cross, so to speak, but he had a purpose in the meantime as he is marching his way there.

And there was no circumstance. There was no outside pressure. There was no opposition that was going to prevent him from doing that. And there's a tremendous lesson for us in this.

[4 : 42] We cannot allow the fear of opposition to prevent us from doing what is right. Look, it's pretty clear that being a Christian is not going to get easier.

It's not. In these next few years, it's actually probably going to get much more difficult. And what I mean by that is this cultural Christianity is going to die.

It's going to die soon. You know what I mean by that? The cultural Christianity that says that Christianity is a part of my life, that's what I am, but they really don't know Christ, and they're really not following Christ. Pop into church maybe from here or there.

Maybe they associate with a particular group, but it's just a cultural label. I'm an American, therefore I'm probably a Christian, at least in the southern United States. That's what it is, right?

There is a cultural Christianity. That's going to die soon. It's going to die soon. It has to, because there is opposition coming from outside forces, outside of the church, that are going to make it more and more difficult to be a Christian, to at least claim to be a Christian.

[5 : 52] You know what's going to happen when we hit that opposition? Do we cower? Do we decide to stop taking a stand on what the Bible teaches? Well, the example of Jesus was that there was no fear of opposition that prevented him from doing what was right, and it shouldn't prevent us either.

At the same time, we can't be so rigid in our preferences that we stop moving forward in the work that God has called us to do.

Well, Jesus' ongoing ministry, by the lake, grew exponentially here, and an environment of chaos very quickly ensued.

Jesus was always willing to show compassion to the people that followed him, but crowds are not presented favorably in the Gospels.

Have you noticed that as you read your Bible, and you read through Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and John, very seldomly are crowds presented in a favorable light? More often than not, crowds are associated with error.

[6 : 59] They're associated with danger, misunderstanding, greed, and so on. The true followers of Jesus often came out of these crowds, but very few people in the crowds actually became true followers of Jesus.

And so as we study these crowds, we see we might would be enamored by their success and not necessarily even surprised by the numerical growth of what was happening around Jesus, but the Scripture very seldomly actually presents these crowds favorably.

What we see in these verses is the crowd actually descending into chaos, and the overall tone of this passage is very negative. It's not positive. So let's look at it.

I've just come up with just a handful of notes as we work through these verses, just simple phrases that we can hang our thoughts on this morning if you want to do that and write these down. The first thing I wrote down is huge crowds.

Huge crowds. Look again at verse 7. And a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and from beyond Jordan.

[8 : 08] And they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him. Now at this point in Jesus' ministry, his popularity had absolutely exploded.

Thousands upon thousands of people are traveling. Some of them are traveling over 100 miles on foot to get to where Jesus is.

This is really quite remarkable when you think about it. This isn't 2021. This is first century Israel, Palestine. Information didn't travel in those days like it travels now.

There was nobody at one of Jesus' healings when he was healing the paralytic. There was nobody there with their iPhone. Live stream into Facebook so that all their friends in Idumea and Tyre and Sidon could see what was happening.

None of that is happening here. There's no newspapers. There's nothing like that. Word traveled by mouth. And there was word that was beginning to travel. But it meant somebody had to leave their home in Galilee to go somewhere else to talk about it.

[9 : 09] And of course, by natural processes of trade and business, that begins to happen. But it didn't take very long and Jesus' ministry began to explode. All of these people are coming.

Do you see from all the different places? Of course, they're coming from all around Galilee. They're coming from Judea. They're coming from Jerusalem. We expect those places, right? But then they also come from Idumea.

That's a section south of Judea. Probably 120, 140 miles they had to go to get to Galilee where Jesus was. And that was in the south.

And then there were people coming from the east. The Transjordan area over the Jordan. There were people coming from over there. There were people coming from the north. Tyre and Sidon. Nobody's coming from the west.

That's the Mediterranean Sea. Nobody could come from there. But they were coming from the north and the east and the south. Some have estimated that tens of thousands of people were coming to Jesus at one time.

[10 : 06] Just this overflow of people coming to Jesus in Galilee. And if you pick up on those regions, it's not just Jews. It's Jews coming from Galilee and Judea and maybe the Transjordan area.

But the Transjordan area was also a mixed group. Tyre and Sidon was almost exclusively Gentile. So there are people from all over the place. All kinds of diversity. All kinds of numbers coming to Jesus at this point.

Well, why is it that Mark is so intent on emphasizing the size and diversity of these crowds? In addition to giving just a realistic depiction of Jesus' ministry, it actually adds credibility and validation to what Jesus was doing.

Think about this. Why were these people coming to Jesus? Because they heard what he could do. And the credibility of those stories was so strong that people are coming from all over the place to see it themselves.

And you'll never find one time in the New Testament anyone who denied the reality of these healings. No one. Not even his enemies.

[11 : 22] The Pharisees knew exactly what he was capable of. Remember the last scene that we studied last week. They brought this man with a withered hand because they knew Jesus would heal him and they just wanted to trap him for doing it on the Sabbath.

They knew who he was. They knew his power. They didn't deny it. They just attributed it to Satan instead of God as we'll get to in just a couple of weeks. No one denied his power.

Remember, these crowds coming together give validity. These are eyewitnesses that are not just 12 men who followed him loosely and came up with this plan, this elaborate plan to deceive the world for 2,000 years.

These are thousands of people that are coming and witnessing this and then they're going elsewhere to tell everybody else about it as well. And so the news of Jesus begins to spread. That's why Mark is writing about this. It's not just a narrative.

It's credibility because what is Mark's purpose in writing this gospel? to proclaim that Jesus is the Son of God and the Messiah. And this was proof that that is indeed the case.

[12 : 22] Now the point immediately forces us to make a decision about Jesus. If thousands of people, including Jesus' enemies, acknowledged his power, who are we to deny it?

It's interesting, isn't it? When Jesus was living, when everybody was around him, nobody questioned the credibility or the validity of what he was doing.

No, that came hundreds of years later with people that weren't there, that weren't around. And they just decided that, well, there's no way that that could ever possibly happen because, you know, science.

And since science doesn't agree with it, then there's no way that this could actually happen. But there are thousands of eyewitnesses that say otherwise. You're forced to make a decision about Christ at this point in this passage. Because if this is real, if this is really who Jesus is, then we are held accountable to his message.

And his message was, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And he was a reference to himself. I am here. I am the Son of God. I am the Messiah. Repent and believe the good news.

[13 : 34] And for those of us that deny that, we do not receive what he then offers, which is the forgiveness and mercy and grace and eternal life. So you must make your decision.

Is Jesus really who he said he was? Was this an elaborate conspiracy that involved multiple nations and thousands of people that conspired to fool us today?

I don't think so. Huge crowds. Number two, imminent danger. Imminent danger. Look with me at verse nine. And Jesus spoke to his disciples and he told them to get a small ship that it should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him.

Now the actions of the hordes of people posed a physical threat to Jesus and his disciples. This is not Jesus adding an aid to his preaching ministry.

The boat wasn't a tool in this story. This was an escape plan. This wasn't Jesus hoping that people will hear him. This is Jesus having his disciples ready to hit the road in case things go south real quick.

[14 : 51] How do we know that? Well, the verse tells us. He spoke to his disciples that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him. The word translated as throng here, it may be something different in your scripture journals, indicates violence.

It means to crush or to press. In that context of first century Israel, it would be to press like grapes in a wine press. Jesus is saying, get a boat ready just in case the crowd presses me, crushes me, presses me like grapes.

This is violence. This is a violent crowd. It gives me the picture of the news stories that we see every Black Friday and after Thanksgiving, right? We see it all the time.

That's what's happening with Jesus. These people are gathering. You get the picture that in the process of this, people are fighting. They're fighting one another to get to where Jesus is.

They're trying to get, they're trying to touch him and it becomes chaotic. And in their attempts to get to Jesus, they actually became a threat to him.

[16 : 02] Now, before we move on, there's something striking to me about the way that Jesus prepared for this potential escape. Jesus could have done anything to get away from these people.

He could have literally, in his power as God, immediately transported himself and his disciples to a completely different place and be gone. He could have done that. He did it in other passages.

You remember in John chapter six, Jesus was walking on water and the disciples didn't recognize him at first and they finally recognize him and he gets in the boat and it says they had been, they'd been rowing all night, contrary to the wind.

They were fighting to get to the other side of the shore and they couldn't make any progress. They're stuck out in the middle of the sea. Jesus gets in the boat and it says immediately they were at the shore. He gets in the boat and the disciples look up and hey, we're not in the sea anymore.

We're where we wanted to go. Okay, Jesus has that power. He could have done that. There was another time in, I believe it was Nazareth actually, where Jesus was being mobbed by a crowd and it says that he passed through the crowd and they did not perceive that he was there.

[17 : 14] This was another miracle moment where Jesus is moving through. But Jesus didn't do that here. He didn't do that here. And it strikes me as kind of unusual. Why wouldn't he do that here?

It was the ordinary means of a boat that he used instead of displaying his supernatural power. Here's the point.

Oftentimes in our prayers, we can be guilty of requesting a supernatural act from God when his plan is really to bless us with the ordinary means of grace instead.

We get behind in our bills maybe and we're just trying to figure out how we're gonna pay it off and it drives us to prayer, right? And we get down to what is it that we pray? If you're like me, it's a selfish prayer.

Lord, if you would please just let me go to the mailbox today and there just be, the stimulus check has arrived, Lord. Would you, whatever it is. We pray.

[18 : 18] You know what? Sometimes it's not that God is seeking to supernaturally drop money from the sky for us. It may be the ordinary means of a budget. It could just be the ordinary means of giving you a few extra hours at work or whatever it may be.

It's the ordinary means of grace that God brings about. It works in other situations in life as well. We think about, we pray for health, particularly when people we know are sick and they're struggling, maybe even knocking at death's door.

We know that God sometimes works in our bodies to provide healing that doctors can't explain and comprehend. We know that's the work of the Lord. Oftentimes that's what we pray for.

And it's right for us to acknowledge that God can do that. Sometimes he does and it's not wrong for us to pray for divine intervention. It's not a wrong thing to do. However, God usually employs the ordinary means of technology and the education of doctors and medicine in order to meet those needs.

We have a tendency to think that God is only at work in the sensational things. And it affects our prayer. It affects the way that we talk about him.

[19 : 40] In the way that we praise him. And my point is that God's work is not limited to what we perceive as supernatural. He often works in ways that seem completely ordinary.

Now, our faith believes in God's ability to do anything. And that's right. And it's good. Our gratitude should reflect that he is sovereign over everything.

Yes, God can provide supernaturally, abundantly, in ways that you would have never expected. But he provides for you every day in ordinary ways that we completely disregard and never actually show gratitude for.

You say, well, I got this job that I have right now because I filled out an application and I interviewed well. Well, yeah, that's true. But that was the ordinary means of grace that God used to provide you with a job that he wanted to bless you with to fulfill his purpose.

He wasn't absent from that. God is intricately involved in your life. Intricately involved. There is nothing in your life that his hand is not touching. And sometimes, most of the time, it's completely ordinary.

[21 : 00] So yes, pray for the supernatural. Pray for God's moving in a unique way, but recognize that there's not one moment in your life that he's not moving. There's not one thing that happens to you that he hasn't involved himself with.

Jesus and his disciples were in imminent danger, but Jesus sets an example of preparedness through the ordinary means of grace. Well, let's move on. Number three, greedy hearts.

Greedy hearts. We've seen huge crowds. We've seen imminent danger. Now we see greedy hearts in verse 10. For he had healed many insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him as many as had plagues.

Verse 10 tells us why the people came to Galilee. They were hoping for healing from their diseases. And certainly, able people were there for other reasons, but the emphasis of the text here is on those who were diseased.

Now, there's no problem in them seeking healing. That's not the problem here. We pray for healing all the time. God never condemns us for coming to him in order to have him meet our physical needs.

[22 : 17] Jesus actually looked compassionately at these people. We've seen this over and over just in the first two and a half chapters of this book. He looks compassionately. He never denied them the healing that they sought.

In fact, his love is so great for us that he healed many people that would not follow him. He healed many people that would deny him.

Perhaps some people that were a part of the crowd that yelled, crucify him. Even in his arrest, Peter pulls out his knife and he cuts off Malchus' ear.

This man has literally come to arrest Jesus to go and have him crucified. And what does Jesus do? Knowing the rejection of his heart, he picks up his ear and he puts it back on the side of his head.

There is a compassion and a love in Jesus and in his actions that we can't even comprehend. And we've quoted Dane Orland in this way, but it's worth doing it again.

[23 : 21] Jesus did not simply operate in deeds of compassion, but actually felt the inner turmoils and roiling emotions of pity toward the unfortunate.

When Jesus healed people in these crowds, it wasn't because he felt an obligation to do so. It's because he had genuine compassion for them. He loved them. He wanted to make a difference in their lives.

He hated to see what life in a fallen world had done. And he wanted to set that right. So the problem is not that they came to him for healing.

That's not the problem. The problem is that their greedy hearts only cared about what they could get from Jesus. None of them stopped for just a moment just to consider what he was trying to do.

He didn't come to heal. He came to preach the gospel. But nobody wanted to listen to his message. There's no indication anywhere in these verses that Jesus even had an opportunity to actually preach the truth to these people because the way they were pressing against him.

[24 : 26] They're clamoring over each other. They're putting other people in danger in order that they could get to Jesus to have him meet there. And he didn't care about anybody else. There's greed in this. Violent greed.

Jesus noted a similar situation after he fed the 5,000 in John chapter 6. Do you remember that story? You can write down the passage.

You can flip there if you want. John chapter 6 verses 25 to 30. Jesus has just fed the 5,000 and he and his disciples went across the lake and they made their way around and they followed him around.

And here's what he said. When they found him on the other side of the sea they said to him Rabbi when did you come here? And Jesus answered them truly, truly I say to you you are seeking me not because you saw signs not because you are trying to figure out who I am and understand my message but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

They were prosperity seekers. And then he tells them do not work for the food that perishes but for the food that endures to eternal life which the son of man will give to you.

[25 : 38] He's referencing himself. For on him God the Father has set his seal. And then they said this What must we do to be doing the works of God?

And Jesus answered them This is the work of God that you believe in him who he has sent. So they said Then what sign do you do that we may see and believe you?

What work do you perform? He just took five pieces of bread and a few fish and fed 5,000 people and these same people are now looking at Jesus and saying Okay, okay prove it.

What? They didn't actually care about who Jesus was they just wanted more from him. Give us more food. They were prosperity seekers. They came to church because they wanted to see if Jesus would give them something that he would reward them for going to church.

If he would reward them for putting money in the offering. If he would reward them for doing their religious duties. They were prosperity seekers. That's what they were looking for. That's the crowd in Mark chapter 3.

[26 : 43] They're greedy. They're just looking to get something from him. And while Jesus cared deeply about their needs his chief objective was to preach the gospel. His compassionate heart wanted what was best for these people but he knew what was actually best for them was the message of forgiveness that only he could provide.

And his miracles though genuinely performed were meant to point people to his identity. If they had just listened to his message they would have realized that he was offering eternal healing that far surpassed the temporary pleasures that they were seeking from him then.

The irony is that they clamored for the one that could heal their souls but all they wanted was for him to heal their bodies. Do you realize you are a soul?

You have a body. Your soul will live forever. Your body will not. You could go through your whole life live perfectly healthy never get any major diseases stay in shape eat right and your body is still going to die.

You are going to die. These people were clamoring to Jesus and he was offering life eternal for them and all they wanted was for him to take care of something that was going to die anyways.

[28 : 22] And how many people they flood to churches or they flood to religion or they flood to whatever it is that they're looking for and they flood to it they're looking for life now to be better but this life it's not going to last. And Jesus is sitting here he said I'll give you something that's far greater.

Give you something far greater than life right now. Far greater than health right now. Far greater than peace right now. Far greater than riches right now. I will give you eternal life in heaven with me.

But all they wanted was healing for their body. Number four evil opposition. We've seen huge crowds imminent danger greedy hearts and then finally evil opposition.

Look with me at verse 11. And unclean spirits when they saw him fell down before him and cried saying thou art the son of God and he straightly charged them that they should not make him known.

That seems weird right? Now once again Mark is bringing together demon possession and diseases all at one time.

[29 : 31] Now he's not doing that to suggest that disease is a result of demonic oppression or possession. That's not the point. What he's doing is he's bringing together the fact of life in a fallen world having both physical and spiritual realities to it.

And that Jesus has authority over both the physical and the spiritual. That's the point in bringing these two things together. The interactions between Jesus and the demons are recorded often in the gospels.

And the demons every time except for perhaps Satan and the temptations in the wilderness we don't see the same thing happening but every single time demons are confronted by Jesus they react fearfully to his presence.

They react fearfully because they know exactly who he is. James chapter 2 tells us this. James chapter 2 in verse 19 you believe that God is one you do well but then James basically says so what?

Even the demons believe that and they shudder they tremble they shake before him that's their disposition. It's one thing to acknowledge that God that Jesus is God it's another thing to follow him as Lord the demons were not willing to do that and so they feared before him because they knew his authority and they knew his power.

[30 : 52] Now fallen angels like this they do not usually desire to be known as such. There are instances in the scripture clearly most of the time around Jesus where they afflict people physically but their work is often in the realm of false religion and government.

We see that all through the scripture. It's subtle and no matter how much they preferred to remain concealed they could not help but outwardly respond when confronted by Jesus.

We often hear about this crying out that they would do they would cry out thou art the son of God identifying who he is but he always every time commands their silence. It's not because Jesus didn't want people to know who he was that was the whole point of all the stuff.

He's healing people so that they would see who he was. He's teaching so that they will hear who he is. He plainly said on multiple occasions I and the father are one. He wasn't trying to hide his identity.

What he was doing is he was proving his identity proving his power by showing his authority even over the spirit world. The demons his silencing his aminos of revealing who he is and he demonstrates his power over them but it's also true that Jesus is not interested in his ministry being connected with that which is evil.

[32 : 19] And that just makes sense. We see this often. You can go to Acts 16 and see another description of this with Paul. We won't do that now but in the same sense we are in no way interested in Christianity associating with false religions like Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses and Christian science Roman Catholicism to unite with such groups is to deny the gospel of Jesus and to perpetuate error.

Paul when he was confronting the Corinthians about their involvement in some of the pagan temples and when they ate there and the idols that were involved he said he encouraged and exhorted against that because what is behind those idols what is behind those religions he said are demons demonic forces.

we see in the Old Testament we see the fights between the right and the wrong the representatives of God and the representatives of Satan in the form of government.

That's how they work mostly. Well we're not interested in Christianity associating with the natural world we're set apart. Well let's close here.

would you consider as we close the intense pressure under which Jesus lived we consider this whole passage here thousands of people pressing against him demanding of him ignoring what he has to say misrepresenting who he is unclean spirits and all of this on the heels of a group of religious and political men seeking to put him to death.

[34 : 12] There's quite a bit of pressure in a life like that. Sometimes our focus is so much on the deity of Christ and rightly so that we forget his humanity.

Jesus overcame every human struggle that was because of his deity but he also felt the pressure of human life to the fullest extent.

There was mounting hostility from religious and political groups that culminated in plots for his murder. He knew well the scrutiny of critical eyes and faced people constantly that did nothing but express what they thought was wrong with him he felt the unending demands of people that clamored for his attention.

He knew the heartache of friends and family forsaking him. He felt the pain of demonic opposition and its hold on the people that he loved.

Kent Hughes said the pressure upon Christ was immense. Our Lord's every move night and day was observed by hostile interlopers. The worst interpretation was placed on everything that they saw and heard.

[35 : 40] Our Lord being truly a man felt the pain of hatred intensely with its emotional discomfort and pervasive alienation. Have you ever felt that way?

have you ever been in a place in your life where it just seems like everybody around you is trying to find everything that's wrong with you and they don't mind letting you know?

The point is that Jesus knew by experience everything that we go through. Not in theory but because he went through it too. Have you been forsaken?

He knows. have people lied about you? He knows what that's like. Have you been misunderstood?

He knows that too. Have you been hurt? He knows. Have you been broke? He knows. Have you been tempted?

[36 : 47] He knows. Hebrews 4 tells us that we don't have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses but one who in every respect remember that phrase in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin.

And then he says let us then come boldly with confidence drawing near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Do you see the gospel taking shape in that? Jesus willingly and purposefully subjected himself to all of this.

Why? so that we can come with confidence to his throne to find mercy and grace. That's the heart of Christ.

when we come to him in our troubles when we come to him with our sin when we come to him with all the things that we're struggling with in life he doesn't look on us with just an unassociated pity.

[38 : 11] No he looks compassionately he feels that because he has been there he knows exactly how you feel and because he did it all without sinning we can come boldly to him knowing that when we go there we get mercy and we get grace from him.

Why would you go to anything else? Nothing else can provide that. No relationship can provide that. No family can provide that. No job no success there is nothing in this life that can provide for you the compassion and the love and the mercy that Jesus extends to everyone who comes to him.

And he ultimately felt our needs to the fullest extent in his death. What is our greatest struggle? Impending death.

It's coming. Jesus knew death. But because of his resurrection he offers us life.

He conquered sin and death in order to provide for us what we cannot provide for ourselves. love. That is the love of Christ. Why did he subject himself to all of this?

[39 : 28] Love. Love. The question for us then is will we receive it?NINGNINGNINGNINGNINGNIN
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