



“A line in the sand.” Perhaps you traced one in the dirt when you were a kid . . . “you cross that line and then I’ll get you.” Or, “Cross the line and be on my side or stay on the other side and be on their side.”

**-- The point was that the other person had to make a decision . . . they had to determine which side of the line they were on.
TR: Or perhaps you’ve said something like . . .**

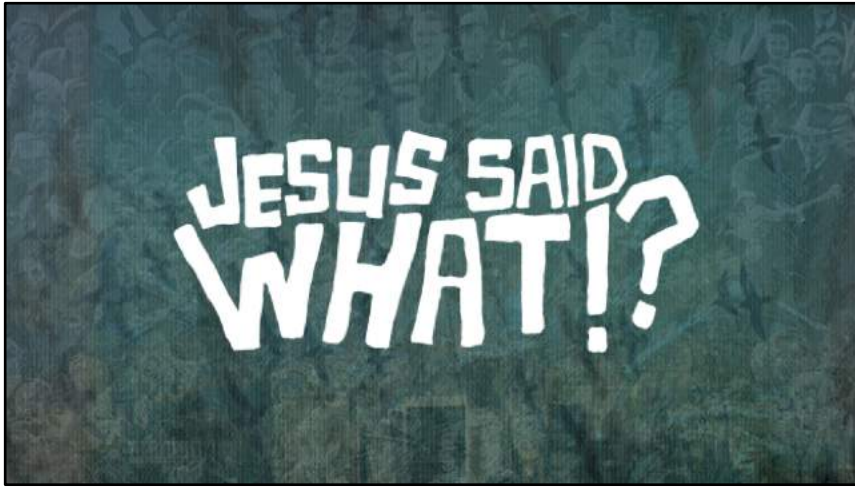
"Fish or cut bait"



stop vacillating and act on something,
or disengage from it

**. . . "Fish or cut bait." You can't do both so make a decision.
-- When something calls for a decision, by its very nature it
becomes divisive.**

**TR: And that's exactly what you could call Jesus when He said
some of the things He did . . . divisive.**



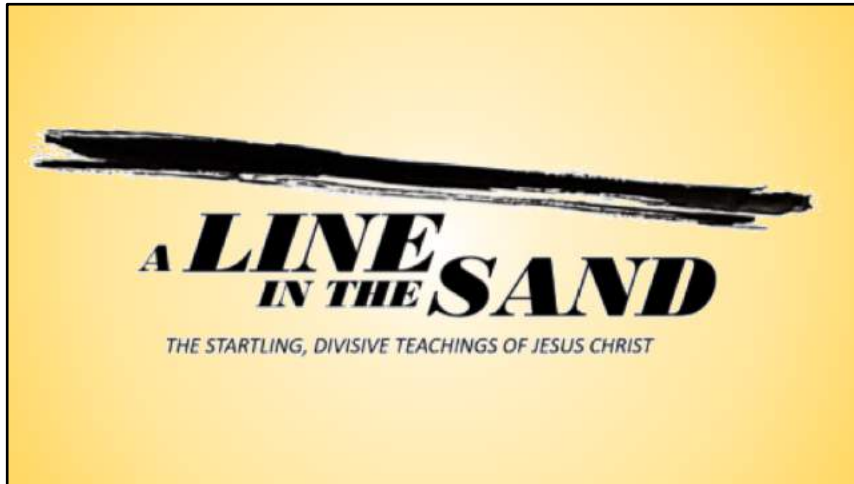
Perhaps we have allowed either our familiarity with the Bible OR our lack of the knowledge thereof to lull us into thinking that Jesus didn't stir up trouble.

-- That He didn't, again and again, draw a line in the sand and push people to make a decision. A decision that revolved around Him.

-- And, even if you decide not to decide, you really still had decided and you were left either fishing or cutting bait.

-- Jesus seemed to take away the middle ground of not taking a side. Neutrality was not an option.

TR: Over the next several weeks, we will look at . . .



... some of the most startling and divisive teachings of Jesus Christ.

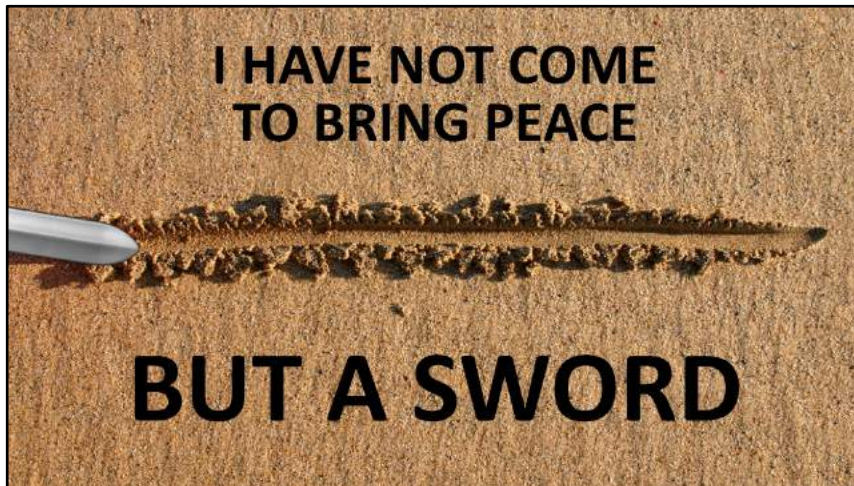
-- Last week, on Resurrection Sunday, we talked about receiving the great big, un-kill-able, death-camp-proof HOPE, the living HOPE that comes through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

-- Some of us have come back to learn more and decide if becoming a Christ-follower is something we want to do.

-- In a culture where so many will say, "I've already done that," I want to provide full disclosure of Who this Jesus is Whom you are considering following. I want you to count the cost of crossing the line of faith to stand with Christ. There is great HOPE, but there is a line to cross!

-- Too many of us have been inoculated to the truth by "easy believism" that merely fills out a card, raises a hand, or walks

**down the aisle.
TR: Jesus said . . .**



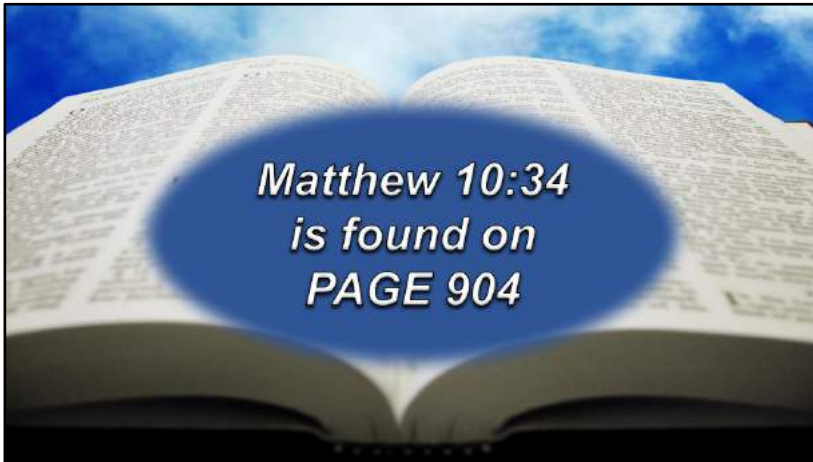
. . . “I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.”

-- In a sense, He draws the line in the sand with the tip of a sword.

-- If we misunderstand this we might twist His teaching into joining a militia and being ready to kill for the sake of His kingdom,

-- . . . but as Jesus made clear to the Roman governor, Pilate, His Kingdom was not like that.

TR: What did Jesus mean when He sliced through our political correctness and said, “I’ve come to bring a sword”?



To understand what Jesus was saying, let's look at how Matthew records His teachings, beginning in Matthew 10.

TR: Let's read verses 34-39.

³⁴"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. **I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.** ³⁵For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. ³⁶And a person's enemies will be those of his own household.

ESV

**This is Jesus speaking . . . READ SLIDE
-- In a world where "households" often included multiple generations, Jesus was saying that He would bring division to even the closest of relationships.**

TR: He continues . . .

³⁷Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- Matthew correctly interprets the idiom that Luke captures in 14:26 - *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple."*

-- Death by martyrdom, as He said earlier in the chapter, or by the self-denial of taking up our cross.

-- (Carson, Matthew in EBC, p. 257) – "In this sense every disciple of Jesus bears the same cross."

TR: The reason the historical Jesus is so polarizing is because .

..



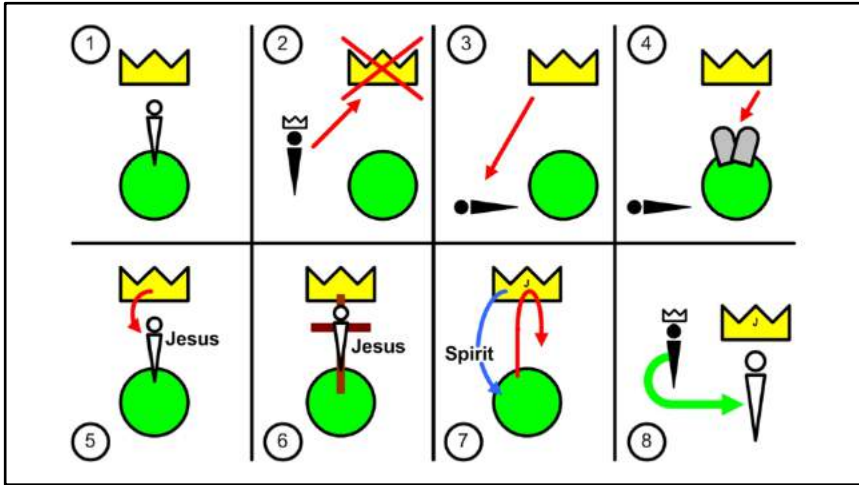
... He makes us choose.

-- Perhaps you have seen one of the little booklets called "The 8 Simple Drawings".

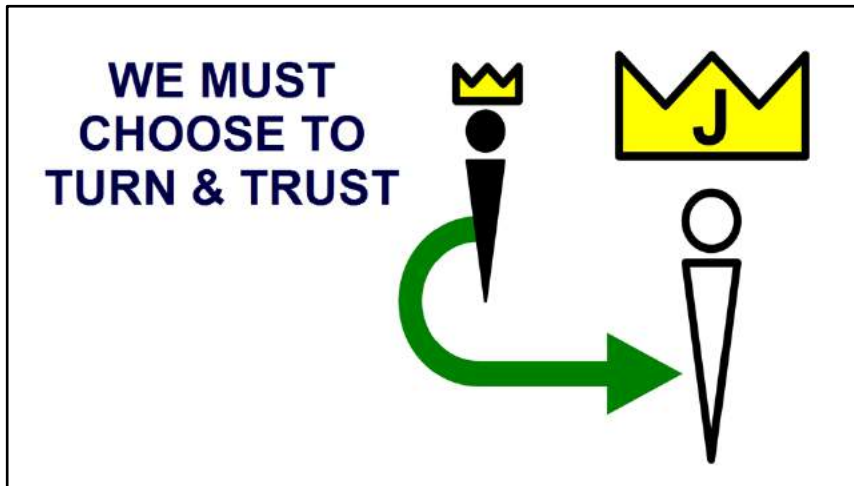
-- Several thousand were taken to Guyana, South America to share the Good News.

-- And it is available on our APP under "Reading"

TR: It is an overview of what the Bible teaches about our choice.



(Review the 8 Simple Drawings)
TR: The 8th drawing captures our choice.



If we want to be saved, born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we must choose.

-- We, each individually, must choose to turn away from our sin (what the Bible calls repentance),

-- AND we must choose to believe, have faith, put our trust in what Jesus has done for us through His life, death, resurrection, ascension and soon to be coming-again.

-- Each one of us, at both the BR and NW campuses, is either still filled with darkness . . . spiritually dead, waiting to physically die and then to face judgment that will result in eternal death OR . . .

-- we are filled with the light and life of Christ, and we are spiritually alive, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, knowing that when we die we will be absent from the body and home with the Lord, looking forward to the resurrection of our bodies and

eternal life in the new heavens and new earth.

TR: Yes, Jesus brings a sword of division because He forces a choice.

John 14:27, 16:33

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.

ESV

But, that doesn't mean that He does not give us peace . . .

READ SLIDE

-- Jesus does promise His disciples peace, but in the midst of tribulation. It will not be the kind of peace that the world gives.

-- So, we can have peace with God and a supernatural peace that overcomes the tribulations of the world, a peace that passes understanding . . .

-- BUT, Jesus still brings a sword, not peace, because He forces us to choose which side of the line we are going to be on.

TR: He, in a sense, tells us to . . .



. . . get off the fence.

-- You can't stand with one foot in the kingdom of God and the other in the kingdom of this world.

-- Crossing the line of faith in Jesus has to be the decision that trumps all other relationships.

-- This is why I had the discussion with my children when they were young about what would happen if they were threatened to try to make me choose to deny Christ.

-- How many so-called moral dilemmas pit doing the right thing versus protecting our loved ones. "They are my children, my wife, my beloved husband. I had to give in and 'negotiate with the terrorist' of my soul." But, a follower of Jesus can't do that.

TR: The wonderful book, The Prisoner in the Third Cell, tells the story of John the Baptist . . .

Matthew 11:3-6

. . . and said to (Jesus), "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" ⁴And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. ⁶**And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.**"

ESV

. . . as he languished in prison. Through his disciples, he sent word to Jesus about the question on his heart as sure death seemed so near.

-- READ SLIDE

TR: Repeat: "And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."



Jesus' assessment of John was, "of those born of women there has arisen no one greater." But Jesus' reply to the Baptizer was not all peaches and cream.

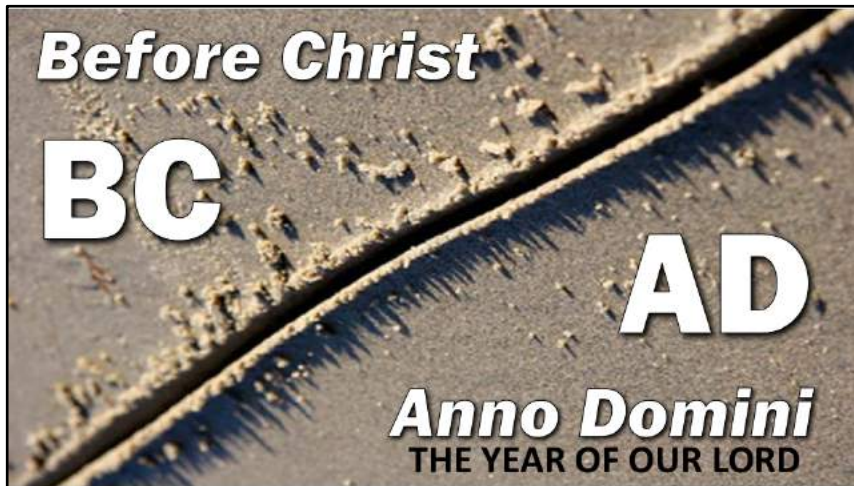
-- Certainly the Lord affirms that He is doing what was prophesied that the Messiah to do.

-- But He adds, "blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

-- It is only the young and those who have not yet suffered in this life who can't imagine what Jesus is talking about.

-- But the bloodied and beat-up, like John understand. Jesus will not necessarily fulfill all our little hopes this side of the revelation of His glory in His second coming.

TR: Jesus is the hinge of history. He makes us choose. Even our calendars say that . . .



READ SLIDE

TR: Even that recognition is too much for some folks. The hinge point may still be the same but they've changed it to . . .



BCE, before the common era, and CE, the common era.

-- Our world wants to take the decisive and divisive teachings of Jesus away, watering them down and washing away the line in the sand.

-- We live in a time when no one wants to offend anyone. Yet, we must learn that Jesus said very offensive things.

-- The ones that stung the most were those aimed at the religious leadership who were pompous hypocrites. So those of us in church have to pay special attention.

-- We sometimes seem to go along and say that we are Christ-followers, but we never make any hard choices of obedience, so Jesus is rarely an offense to us.

TR: But His sword draws a line in the sand and exposes what's really going on.



He is telling us to get off the fence.

-- And our UNwillingness to do so is not savvy politics or loving ministry to the lost . . .

-- . . . it is nothing less than us saying, "No." "No, Lord" – the ultimate oxymoron.

-- Yes, we give a reason for our hope with gentleness and respect, but not without "the stumbling block of Jesus."

-- Our times want churches to focus on "good deeds" that are no different than many actions of non-Christian philanthropists. But, when we make the good deeds lead to opportunities to present the great news, the Gospel. Then we are branded and judged to be bigots.

TR: But Jesus will have none of it . . .

Matthew 12:30-32

³⁰Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.
³¹Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³²And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

ESV

A few pages to the right we read . . . READ SLIDE

TR: Jesus drew the line in the sand, even in His hometown area . . .

Matthew 13:54b-57

"Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? ⁵⁵Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" ⁵⁷**And they took offense at him.** But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.

ESV

**. . . as the next chapter in Matthew captures . . . READ SLIDE
-- When Jesus taught in their synagogue, they were astonished. But, it was not enough to get them over the hurdle of thinking that this hometown boy was just like them.
-- We don't know if Jesus taught things exactly like what Matthew puts just before His return to hometown Nazareth, but my guess is that what He taught was equally offensive.
TR: Who draws a line this firmly?**

Matthew 13:41-43

The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, ⁴²and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

ESV

READ SLIDE

**-- Jesus repeatedly identified Himself as the Son of Man . . .
would He really be THE judge?**

**TR: Would there really only be two consequences at the end
of the age?**

Matthew 13:49-50

So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

ESV

As verses 49 and 50 say . . . READ SLIDE

-- If, in our communities, we present Jesus as the Lover of our Souls and the Giver of Hope but nothing more, we have taken offense at Him.

-- Our culture hates the idea of an eternal hell and it is far less offensive to say that everyone gets saved eventually . . . that our choice really doesn't matter, except as a way to avoid a lot of time in a purgatory like purifying time before we are all won over by the love of God.

-- But, Jesus draws a line. We must choose. And, to not choose is to choose to stay on the side of the line without Jesus.

TR: In a few weeks we'll look at this next passage in detail . . .

John 6:53-54 (page 988 in handout Bibles)

So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: If you imagine that everyone who heard Jesus teach and saw Him do miracles all became His followers, you imagine wrongly.

John 6:60-64a

⁶⁰When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" ⁶¹But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, "**Do you take offense at this?**" ⁶²Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? ⁶³It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ⁶⁴But there are some of you who do not believe."

ESV

READ SLIDE

- It was not that Jesus didn't understand how offensive His teaching was.
- Without robbing from the future teaching time, key into Jesus' question, "Do you take offense at this?"
- If we do not eat the flesh and drink his blood then we will not have eternal life.

TR: While the details will wait a few weeks, don't miss why this is so offensive.



Jesus is making it clear that there is only one way to receive eternal life.

-- There is only one side of the line in the sand that leads to a forever with God.

TR: The offensiveness of Jesus is His exclusive claims.

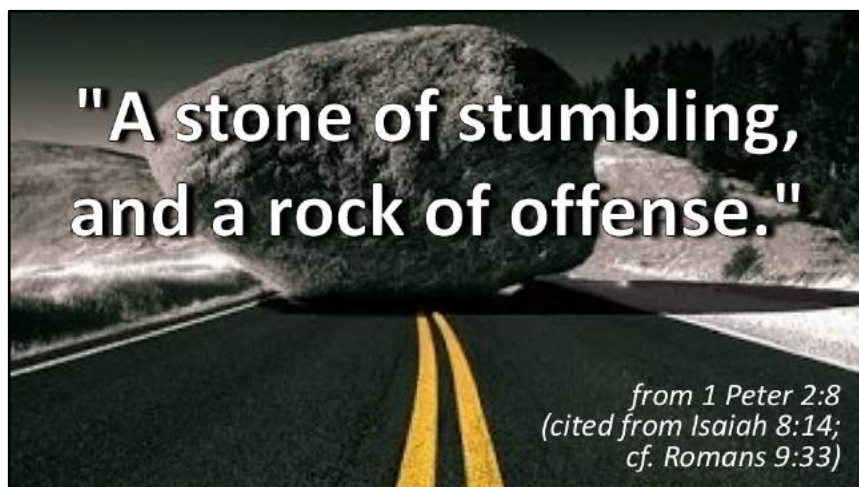


ONE OF THE WAYS?
OR
THE ONE WAY?

He doesn't say that He is ONE of the WAYS . . . rather, that He is the ONE and ONLY WAY.

-- Not all roads lead to heaven, no matter what the so-called "tolerant" world says.

TR: As both Peter and Paul tell us, Jesus, in fulfillment of the prophecy by Isaiah, is . . .



- . . . a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.**
- We will either stand on the rock or be crushed by Him.**
 - There is no middle ground.**
 - There will be no fence riding. No feet in both sides of the line in the sand. No neutrality.**
- TR: If someone preaches about Jesus biblically, they will teach about . . .**

*If someone preaches about Jesus biblically,
they teach about . . .*

HOPE but not PRESUMPTION

LOVE but not INDULGENCE

GRACE but not LICENSE

. . . READ SLIDE

TR: Jesus causes division because He demands to be . . .



LORD OF ALL OR
NOT LORD AT ALL



... READ SLIDE

TR: Have you been offended by Jesus? And yet, you find Him so attractive.



You want to be on His side, but you don't want to make a full commitment.

-- You want to hedge your bets.

-- You want to minimize your potential loses and exposure to risk.

-- You want to have fire insurance out of hell but you don't want to fully bow the knee this side of death.

-- You don't want to have to choose . . . but we all have to. Jesus draws a line in the sand.

TR: Will you today choose to cross the line of faith?



Will you trust Jesus as Lord and Savior?

-- Perhaps you are like John the Baptist. You have declared, "Behold, the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world." But, now that you are in the prison you've started to wonder. "Is He really the One?"

-- On the evidence of the resurrection, we know that He is the One.

-- But, that doesn't take away our choice.

-- Will you be offended by Jesus or will you choose to take up your cross and follow Him?

-- Part of the expression of that choice is the choice to be baptized and to partake of communion (lead into communion but with lead in song of "Come to the Altar")



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