SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 16

Come Over to Macedonia and Help Us — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

The Holy Spirit steers the gospel by closing doors and opening hearts, and He carries it into Europe through a merchant, a slave-girl and a jailer. Whoever I am and wherever I am locked up, the answer to "What must I do to be saved?" is the same: believe in the Lord Jesus.

00 The Text

ACTS 16 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions; Command / instruction; Key repeated word; Sin / warning; Promise / blessing; Time / place / contrast

1 Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek,

2 and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium.

3 Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

4 Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe.

5 So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.

6 They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia;

7 and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them;

8 and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.

9 A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

10 When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

11 So putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis;

12 and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were staying in this city for some days.

13 And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled.

14 A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.

15 And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to

be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

16 It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling.

17 Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation."

18 She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment.

19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities,

20 and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews,

21 and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans."

22 The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods.

23 When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely;

24 and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

25 But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;

26 and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened.

27 When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.

28 But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!"

29 And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas,

30 and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

31 They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house.

33 And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household.

34 And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.

35 Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, "Release those men."

36 And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Therefore come out now and go in peace."

37 But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out."

38 The policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. They were afraid when they heard that they were Romans,

39 and they came and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city.

40 They went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.

Marked in the text

- **v1** "a disciple was there, named Timothy" — Time / place / contrast
- **v2** "well spoken of by the brethren" — Promise / blessing
- **v3** "because of the Jews who were in those parts" — Time / place / contrast
- **v5** "the churches were being strengthened in the faith" — Promise / blessing
- **v5** "increasing in number daily" — Promise / blessing
- **v6** "forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia" — God — His character & actions
- **v7** "the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them" — God — His character & actions
- **v9** "Come over to Macedonia and help us" — Command / instruction
- **v10** "God had called us to preach the gospel to them" — God — His character & actions
- **v13** "a place of prayer" — Time / place / contrast
- **v14** "the Lord opened her heart" — God — His character & actions
- **v15** "come into my house and stay" — Command / instruction
- **v16** "a spirit of divination" — Sin / warning
- **v16** "bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling" — Sin / warning
- **v17** "bond-servants of the Most High God" — God — His character & actions
- **v18** "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her" — Command / instruction
- **v19** "their hope of profit was gone" — Sin / warning
- **v22** "beaten with rods" — Sin / warning
- **v24** "fastened their feet in the stocks" — Sin / warning
- **v25** "about midnight" — Time / place / contrast
- **v25** "praying and singing hymns of praise to God" — Command / instruction
- **v26** "all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened" — God — His character & actions
- **v28** "Do not harm yourself" — Command / instruction
- **v30** "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" — Time / place / contrast
- **v31** "Believe in the Lord Jesus" — Command / instruction
- **v31** "you will be saved, you and your household" — Promise / blessing
- **v33** "washed their wounds" — Time / place / contrast
- **v34** "rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household" — Promise / blessing
- **v37** "They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans" — Sin / warning
- **v40** "they encouraged them and departed" — Command / instruction
- **v15** "household" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v15** "house" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v23** "prison" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

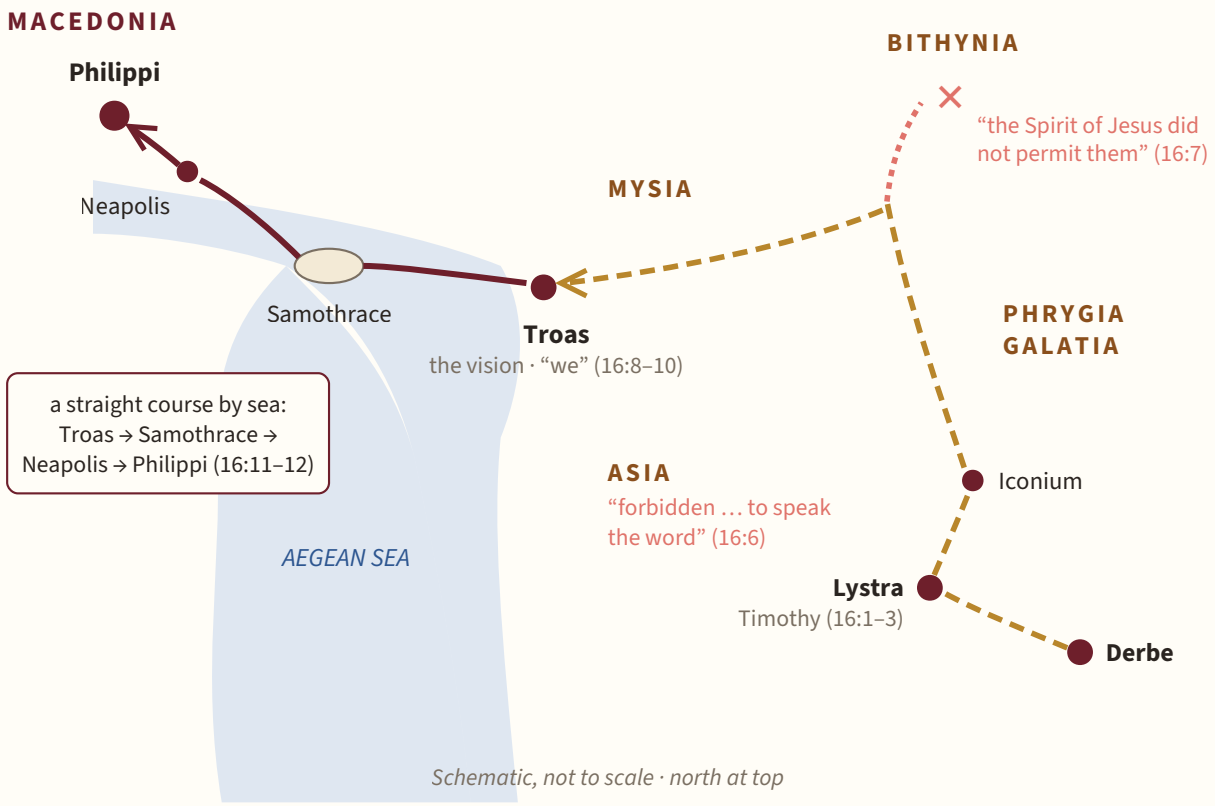
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 16:9

"A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us.""

FIGURE · FROM LYSTRA TO PHILIPPI



Trace the gold line from Derbe and Lystra north toward Bithynia, see the door shut twice, then follow the team west to Troas and across the sea to Philippi.

Setting. Derbe and Lystra, where Paul takes Timothy (vv1–5); through Phrygia and Galatia, blocked from Asia and Bithynia, down to Troas on the Aegean coast (vv6–8); the vision of the man of Macedonia (vv9–10). By sea to Neapolis and Philippi, a Roman colony (vv11–12). At the river, Lydia (vv13–15); on the way to prayer, the slave-girl (vv16–18); the market place, the magistrates, the prison (vv19–34); the release and Lydia's house (vv35–40).

Structure:

- vv1–5 — **Timothy:** a disciple, son of a Jewish believer and a Greek father (v1); well spoken of (v2); circumcised because of the Jews (v3); the decrees delivered (v4); churches strengthened and growing daily (v5).

- vv6–10 — **guidance:** forbidden by the Holy Spirit in Asia (v6); the Spirit of Jesus does not permit Bithynia (v7); Troas (v8); "Come over to Macedonia and help us" (v9); "we" — God had called us (v10).
- vv11–15 — **Lydia:** a straight course to Philippi (vv11–12); a place of prayer by the river (v13); the Lord opened her heart (v14); she and her household baptized; "come into my house" (v15).
- vv16–24 — **the slave-girl and the stocks:** a spirit of divination, profit for her masters (v16); "bond-servants of the Most High God" (v17); "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ" (v18); hope of profit gone — dragged to the magistrates (vv19–21); beaten with rods, the inner prison, the stocks (vv22–24).
- vv25–34 — **the jailer:** praying and singing at midnight (v25); earthquake, doors open, chains loose (v26); the sword (v27); "we are all here!" (v28); "what must I do to be saved?" (vv29–30); "Believe in the Lord Jesus" (v31); the word spoken, wounds washed, baptized, food, rejoicing (vv32–34).
- vv35–40 — **Roman citizens:** "Release those men" (vv35–36); "beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans … let them come themselves" (v37); the magistrates afraid, begging (vv38–39); Lydia's house, the brethren encouraged (v40).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "we / us" ×19 — vv9, 10 (×2), 11, 12, 13 (×3), 15 (×2), 16 (×2), 17, 21, 28, 37 (×4) — Luke is now in the story.
- "Paul" ×12 — vv1, 3, 9, 14, 17, 18, 19, 25, 28, 29, 36, 37.
- "house / household" ×9 — vv15 (×2), 26, 31, 32, 33, 34 (×2), 40.
- "prison / prison house" ×8 — vv23, 24, 25, 26, 27 (×2), 37, 40.
- "city / cities" ×6 — vv4, 12 (×2), 14, 20, 39.
- "God" ×5 — vv10, 14, 17, 25, 34; "chief magistrates" ×5 — vv20, 22, 35, 36, 38.
- "Spirit / spirit" ×4 — vv6, 7 (the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus), 16, 18 (the spirit of divination).
- "Lord" ×4 — vv14, 15, 31, 32; "Macedonia" ×4 — vv9 (×2), 10, 12; "Roman(s)" ×4 — vv12, 21, 37, 38.
- "saved / salvation" ×3 — vv17, 30, 31; "believer / believe / believed" ×3 — vv1, 31, 34.
- "open(ed)" ×3 — vv14, 26, 27; "prayer / praying" ×3 — vv13, 16, 25; "command(ing)" ×3 — vv18, 23, 24.
- "Silas" ×3 — vv19, 25, 29; "jailer" ×3 — vv23, 27, 36; "Jesus" ×3 — vv7, 18, 31.
- "immediately / suddenly / at that very moment / that very hour" ×6 — vv10, 18, 26 (×2), 33 (×2).

Contrasts: Forbidden (vv6–7) ⟷ called (v10). Lydia's open heart (v14) ⟷ the masters' closed fists (v19). A spirit of divination (v16) ⟷ the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Jesus (vv6–7). Profit (vv16, 19) ⟷ salvation (vv17, 30–31). Feet fastened in the stocks (v24) ⟷ chains unfastened (v26). The jailer's sword at his own throat (v27) ⟷ "Do not harm yourself" (v28). Midnight (v25) ⟷ "when day came" (v35). Beaten in public (v37) ⟷ sent away secretly (v37). Roman pride (v21) ⟷ Roman fear (v38).

Shape of the chapter: two short movements of preparation (a partner, then a direction), then three people in Philippi — each freed in a different way — and a closing scene where the beaten missionaries leave on their own terms. Luke's "we" runs through the Philippi story and then stops at the prison door.

Chapter theme (my words): God guides His servants by shutting doors and opening hearts, and in Philippi He frees a merchant, a slave and a jailer. Singing in the dark, Paul and Silas preach the shortest gospel: believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 16:14

"A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and △the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul."

FIGURE · THREE SET FREE IN PHILIPPI

THREE PEOPLE SET FREE IN PHILIPPI · ACTS 16:13–34

	LYDIA vv13–15	THE SLAVE-GIRL vv16–18	THE JAILER vv23–34
WHO	a seller of purple from Thyatira; free, well-off, devout	owned by masters; a spirit of divination made them money	a Roman officer under orders; his life for the prisoners
HOW REACHED	"the Lord opened her heart" while she listened	"I command you in the name of Jesus Christ"	songs at midnight, an earthquake, and his question
WHAT FOLLOWED	baptized with her household; opens her home	the spirit leaves at once; Luke tells us nothing more	believes, is baptized with his household, and rejoices

A businesswoman, a slave and a jailer — rich, owned and official — and one Lord for them all.

Read each column down: three very different people, three different ways Jesus reached them — and Luke tells us how each story ended, or that he does not.

Why did Paul circumcise Timothy after Acts 15? Because of "the Jews who were in those parts" (v3), not for salvation. Guzik (with Bruce): a Jewish mother made him a Jew in the synagogue's eyes; uncircumcised, he would have closed every synagogue door. Guzik: "Paul did things for the sake of love that he would not do for the sake of trying to please God through legalism." Henry adds that it was no precedent. Compare Titus, a Gentile, whom Paul refused to circumcise when the gospel itself was at stake (Galatians 2:3).

How did the Spirit forbid them (vv6–7)? Luke does not say — perhaps a prophetic word, sickness, or circumstances. He tells us who, not how. Guzik: "Paul was guided by hindrance." Henry: "We must now follow providence." I take from this that a closed door is not always the devil; sometimes it is the Spirit of Jesus.

Who is "we" (v10)? The writer joins the team at Troas. Guzik reads it as Luke, the doctor, and thanks God for His "no": without it, no Gospel of Luke or Book of Acts as we have them.

What does "the Lord opened her heart" teach (v14)? That conversion is God's work first. Sproul: "regeneration precedes faith." Henry: "Conversion-work is heart-work." Spurgeon: her heart was opened "to attend to the gospel, that is, to desire it." Guzik draws the practical point: pray for God to open hearts. Lydia still listened, believed and was baptized — God's opening does not make a man passive; it makes him able.

What about "household" baptism (vv15, 33)? Here my teachers differ, and I want to be fair. Sproul and Henry stood in the Reformed tradition that baptizes the children of believers, and Sproul's Acts series includes a sermon titled "The Doctrine of Baptism." Spurgeon and Guzik baptized believers only; Spurgeon notes, "Her household believed, and were baptized with her." Luke says the word was spoken to all in the jailer's house (v32) and that he rejoiced "having believed in God with his whole household" (v34). What no one teaches is that a man's faith saves his family automatically; each one must believe.

Why was Paul annoyed with a girl who told the truth (vv17–18)? Guzik: "he didn't need demonic approval of his work." Henry: the devil was using truth "to deceive people." Paul cast the spirit out "in the name of Jesus Christ" — the authority was Christ's, not Paul's.

What must I do to be saved (vv30–31)? "Believe in the Lord Jesus." Guzik: "This is salvation by grace alone, received by faith alone." Sproul's sermon, as Ligonier describes it, shows how God "brings people to the end of themselves" to lead them to Christ. Spurgeon: by morning "He had passed from death unto life!" Faith shows itself at once in washing wounds, baptism and joy.

Why did Paul claim citizenship only after the beating (v37)? Henry: "It was not a point of honour that Paul stood thus stiffly upon, but a point of justice." A public release cleared the young church's name. Guzik: God may ask us to lay rights down — or, as here, to use them for others.

Word study (Greek):

- **well spoken of — *martyreō* (G3140):** attested, a good report (v2).
- **decrees — *dogma* (G1378):** the Jerusalem letter (v4).
- **forbidden — *kōlyō* (G2967); permit — *eaō* (G1439):** vv6–7.
- **vision — *horama* (G3705); help — *boētheō* (G997); concluding — *symbibazō* (G4822):** vv9–10.
- **place of prayer — *proseuchē* (G4335):** v13.
- **worshiper — *sebomai* (G4576); opened — *dianoigō* (G1272); respond — *prosechō* (G4337):** v14.
- **divination — *Pythōn* (G4436):** "a spirit of Python" (v16).
- **beaten with rods — *rhabdizō* (G4463):** v22; 2 Cor 11:25.
- **stocks — *xylon* (G3586):** wood; the "tree" of 1 Pet 2:24.
- **singing hymns — *hymneō* (G5214); listening — *epakroaomai* (G1874):** v25.
- **earthquake — *seismos* (G4578):** v26.
- **saved — *sōzō* (G4982); believe — *pisteuō* (G4100):** vv30–31, 34.
- **rejoiced greatly — *agalliaō* (G21):** v34.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **Love bends where the gospel cannot** — Timothy circumcised (Guzik).
2. **A good report from two churches** (v2).
3. **Guided by hindrance** (Guzik; Henry).

4. **The Lord opened; she responded** (Sproul; Henry).
5. **Pray before you speak** (Guzik).
6. **True words from a wrong source** (v17).
7. **Follow the money** (Henry).
8. **Midnight songs reach prisoners** (v25).
9. **The shortest gospel in the Bible** (v31).
10. **The same hands, one night apart** — stocks, then washing (Spurgeon).

Cross-references: Ps 107:10–16; 146:7; Isa 42:7; Matt 26:30; Luke 24:31, 45; John 6:44; Acts 1:8; 6:3; 8:36; 14:19; 19:10; Rom 10:9; 2 Cor 11:25; Gal 2:3; Eph 2:8–9; Phil 1:1–7; 3:20; 1 Thess 2:2; 2 Tim 3:11, 15; 1 Pet 2:24.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 16:25

"But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;"

FIGURE · ONE NIGHT IN THE PRISON



Follow the six panels across one night, then look at the bottom band: the same hands that fastened the stocks wash the wounds.

Promise to trust — believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved. I have sat across from men in orange who think they are too far gone, and men in recovery who think they have to clean up first. The jailer had a sword at his own throat, and Paul gave him one command: believe (v31). This week I will say that sentence, plainly, to at least one man who needs to hear it.

Example to follow — Paul and Silas at midnight. Bleeding, in the stocks, in the dark — and they prayed and sang, and "the prisoners were listening" (v25). Somebody is always listening to how I handle my midnight. When the bad news comes this week, I will pray out loud and choose a song of praise before I choose a complaint.

Command to obey — follow the closed doors. I have pushed on doors God shut and resented Him for it. Paul let the Spirit say no twice and ended up where God wanted him (vv6–10). I will name one closed door in my life and thank God for it, and ask Him where He is calling me instead.

Truth to hold — the Lord opens hearts. I cannot argue anyone into the kingdom. Lydia listened because "the Lord opened her heart" (v14). Before I speak to the man I am burdened for, I will pray for him by name and ask God to open his heart — and then I will still speak.

Sin to confess — using people for profit. The slave-girl's masters cared about her only for what she earned them (vv16, 19). I confess the ways I have used people — for money, for comfort, for status — and I ask God to let me see them as souls Christ came to free.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. Timothy was "well spoken of by the brethren" in two towns. What would the men who know me best say about my walk with Christ? (16:1–3; Acts 6:3) *Character is seen by others before it is used by God.*
2. Where has God shut a door on me lately? How might that "no" be guiding me toward something He has prepared? (16:6–10) *Paul was guided by hindrance (Guzik).*
3. The Lord opened Lydia's heart while Paul spoke. Whose heart am I praying for God to open — and am I speaking to him? (16:13–15; John 6:44) *Conversion-work is heart-work (Henry).*
4. The slave-girl's masters cared about profit, not her freedom. Where do I treat people as useful to me rather than as souls Christ wants to free? (16:16–19) *Their hope of profit was gone.*
5. Paul and Silas sang in the stocks at midnight. What is my "midnight" right now, and what would praise in it look like? (16:23–25; Ps 107:14) *No place, no time, amiss for prayer (Henry).*
6. The jailer asked, "What must I do to be saved?" and got one answer. How would I answer that question for a man in my group, in one sentence? (16:30–34; Rom 10:9) *Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.*

Worship. The Spirit of Jesus leads His servants, even by saying no. The Lord opens hearts that no preacher can open, casts out spirits by the name of Jesus Christ, shakes prison foundations at midnight, and saves a frightened man in one hour. He sets the prisoners free.

Prayer. Lord Jesus, You are the One who opens and shuts. Thank You for the doors You closed on me and the heart You opened in me. Give me a song at midnight, so the men around me hear what You can do in the dark. Open the hearts of the men I pray for, and give me the courage to tell them plainly: believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved. Make my home, like Lydia's and the jailer's, a place where Your people are welcome. Amen.

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