

Light and Life

The first Christmas

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More than 160 countries celebrate Christmas. Each country has its own special traditions.

People in many countries sing Christmas carols. Carols are joyful songs about the birth of Jesus. Many churches have carol services which are lit by candlelight.

These services include carols and Bible readings about the first Christmas.

“Hark! the Herald Angels Sing” is a popular English Christmas carol, written in 1739. The carol tells us to listen to the angel announcing Jesus’s birth.

In the Bible, the angel explains: **“I bring you good news. This news will make everyone very happy.”¹**

**Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the new-born King:
peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!”
Joyful, all you nations rise,
join the triumph of the skies;
with angelic host proclaim,
“Christ is born in Bethlehem!”
Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the new-born King.”**

Hark! the Herald Angels Sing, a well-known Christmas carol.

Light in the darkness

“Hark! the Herald Angels Sing” includes the words:

“Light and life to all he brings...”

The Bible speaks a lot about light.

In the beginning, everywhere was dark:

“In the beginning, God made the heavens and the earth. The earth was without shape and it was empty. Deep water covered the earth and everywhere was dark. The Spirit of God moved above the water. God said, ‘There will be light!’ And there was light.”²

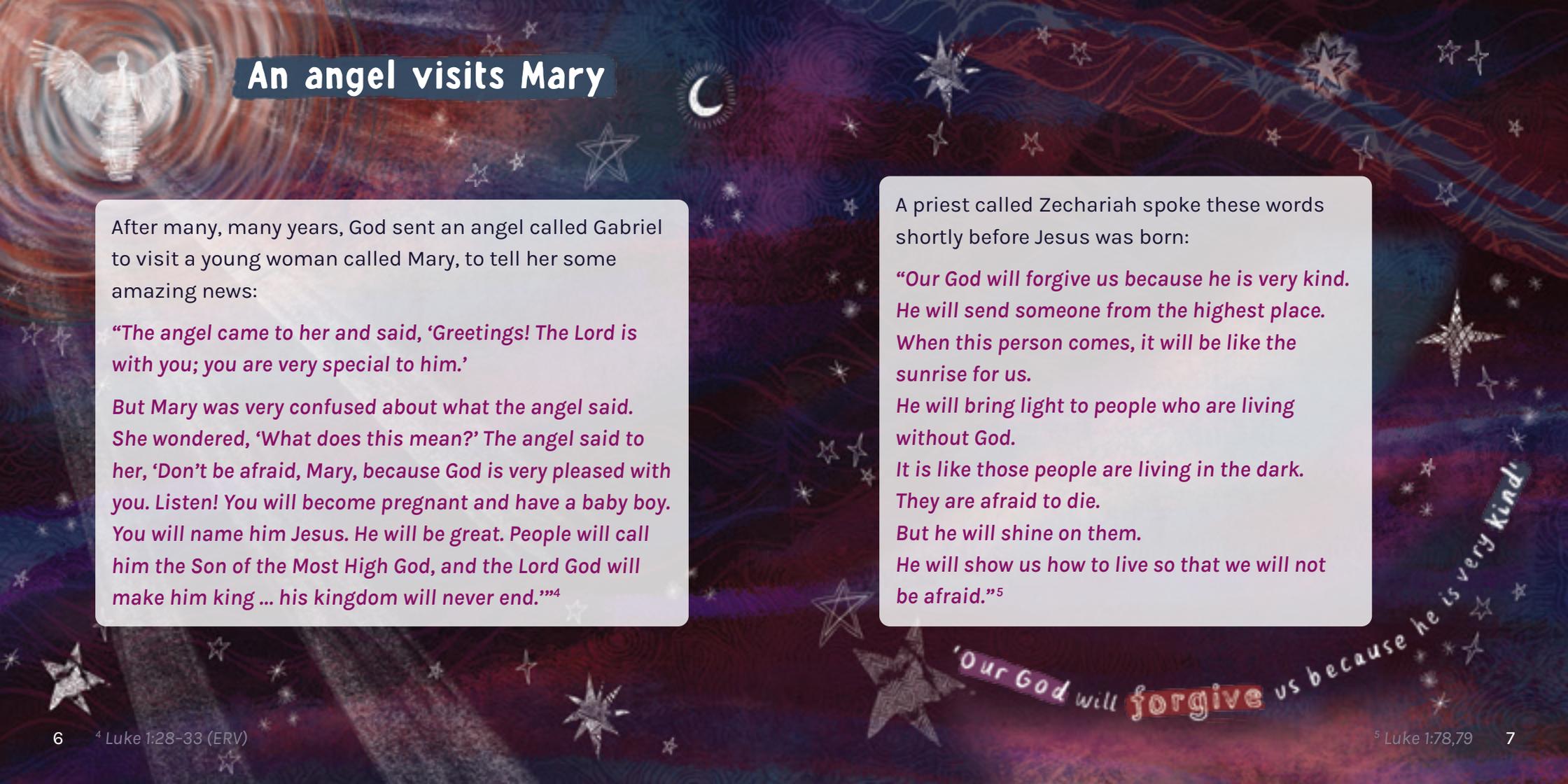
God created a good world full of light, but people made the world dark by doing bad things.

The prophet Isaiah wrote these words 700 years before the birth of Jesus:

“Those people lived in darkness, but they will see a great light. ... This will happen when the special child is born. God will give us a son who will be responsible for leading the people. His name will be ‘Wonderful Counsellor, Powerful God, Father Who Lives Forever, Prince of Peace.’”³

The people waited for this promise to come true...

Light and life
to all he brings...!



An angel visits Mary

After many, many years, God sent an angel called Gabriel to visit a young woman called Mary, to tell her some amazing news:

“The angel came to her and said, ‘Greetings! The Lord is with you; you are very special to him.’

But Mary was very confused about what the angel said. She wondered, ‘What does this mean?’ The angel said to her, ‘Don’t be afraid, Mary, because God is very pleased with you. Listen! You will become pregnant and have a baby boy. You will name him Jesus. He will be great. People will call him the Son of the Most High God, and the Lord God will make him king ... his kingdom will never end.’”⁴

A priest called Zechariah spoke these words shortly before Jesus was born:

“Our God will forgive us because he is very kind. He will send someone from the highest place. When this person comes, it will be like the sunrise for us.

He will bring light to people who are living without God.

It is like those people are living in the dark. They are afraid to die.

But he will shine on them.

He will show us how to live so that we will not be afraid.”⁵

Jesus is born

Mary married a man named Joseph and they travelled to Joseph's hometown, Bethlehem. They had to sleep in a stable because they could not find a place to stay. Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

*"That night some shepherds were living out in the fields near Bethlehem. They were keeping their sheep safe. Then an angel of the Lord appeared to them. A bright light from God shone all around them. That frightened them very much. The angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. Listen! I bring you good news. This news will make everyone very happy. Something happened today in the town of David. Someone special was born. He is the one who will save you. He is the Messiah [God's King]. He is the Lord. I will tell you how you will know this baby. You will find him with cloths around him. He is lying in an animal's food box.'"*⁶

*'Someone special was born.
He is the one who will
save you'*

Wise men visit Jesus

Mary and Joseph took the baby Jesus to the temple. They met a man called Simeon. Simeon understood that Jesus was sent from God. Simeon prayed:

“I really have seen the person that you have sent to save your people.

You have sent him to the world and people everywhere will know about him.

He will bring light to people so that they can know you.”⁷

Some wise men from far away saw a new star in the sky. They knew a King had been born. They travelled a long way to find Jesus.

“They were very happy when they saw the star. It moved along in front of them. Then it stopped above the place where the child was staying. The men went into the house and they saw the child. He was with Mary, his mother. They went down on their knees in front of the child, and they worshipped him. Then they opened their bags. They took out valuable gifts and they gave them to the child. The gifts were gold, incense called frankincense, and also myrrh.”⁸

Jesus brings light to everyone

Christmas carol services are full of joy. They celebrate Jesus coming to earth to bring light to all people.

Often these words from the Bible are read out in carol services:

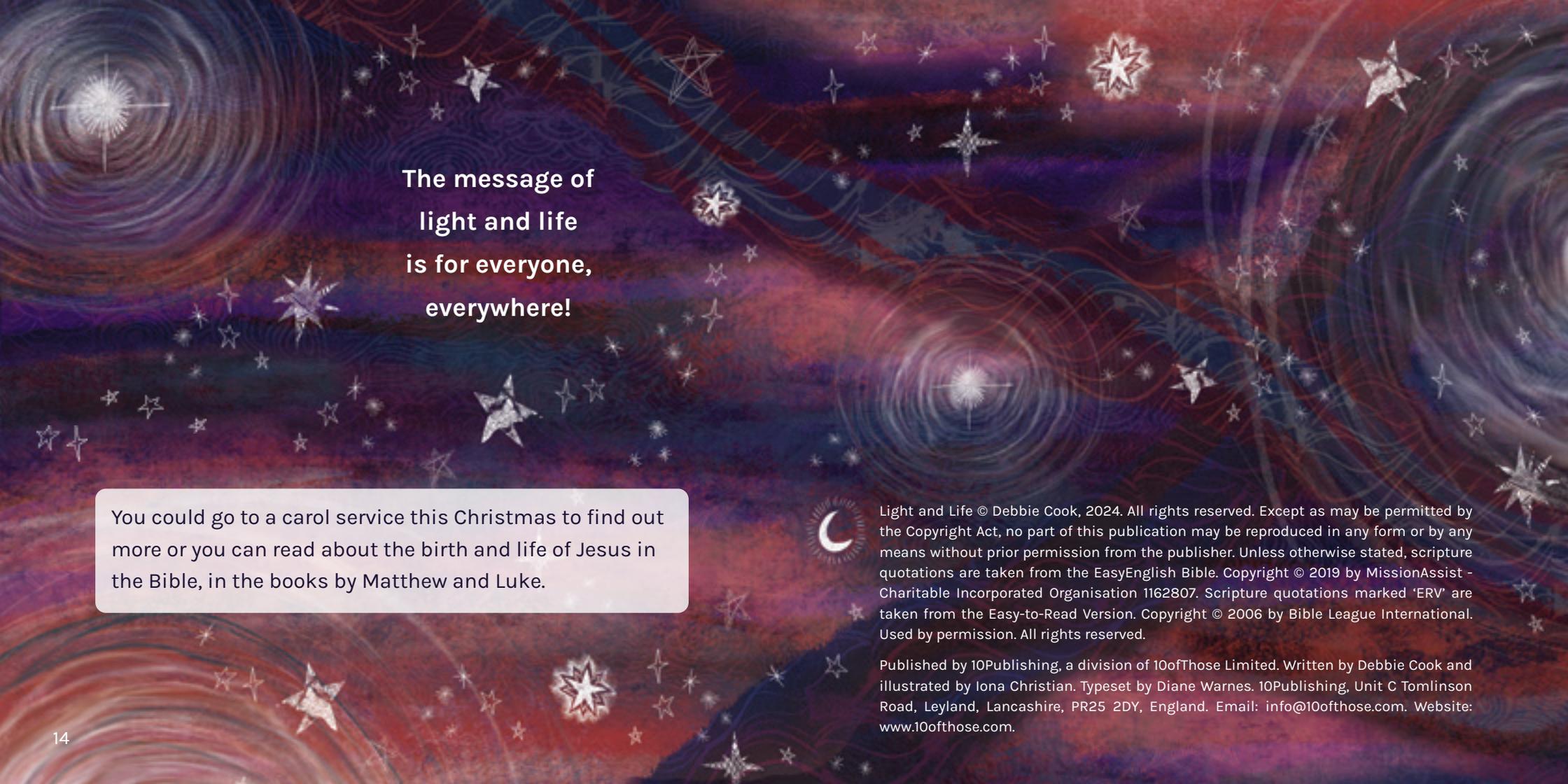
“In the beginning, the Word [Jesus] was already there. The Word [Jesus] was with God. The Word [Jesus] was God. He was with God from the beginning. God made all things through the Word [Jesus]. God did not make anything without him. It is the Word [Jesus] who caused everything to live. Because of this, he has brought light to all people. The light shines in the dark, and the dark cannot put out the light.”⁹

When Jesus grew up, he taught people about light. Jesus explained he brings light that gives people life for ever:

“Jesus spoke to the people again. He said, ‘I am the light of the world. Those people who become my disciples will never walk in the dark. No, they will have the light that gives life.’”¹⁰

“I have come into the world to be a light for people. Everyone who believes in me will not remain in the dark. That is why I came.”¹¹

*‘The dark cannot
put out the **light**’*



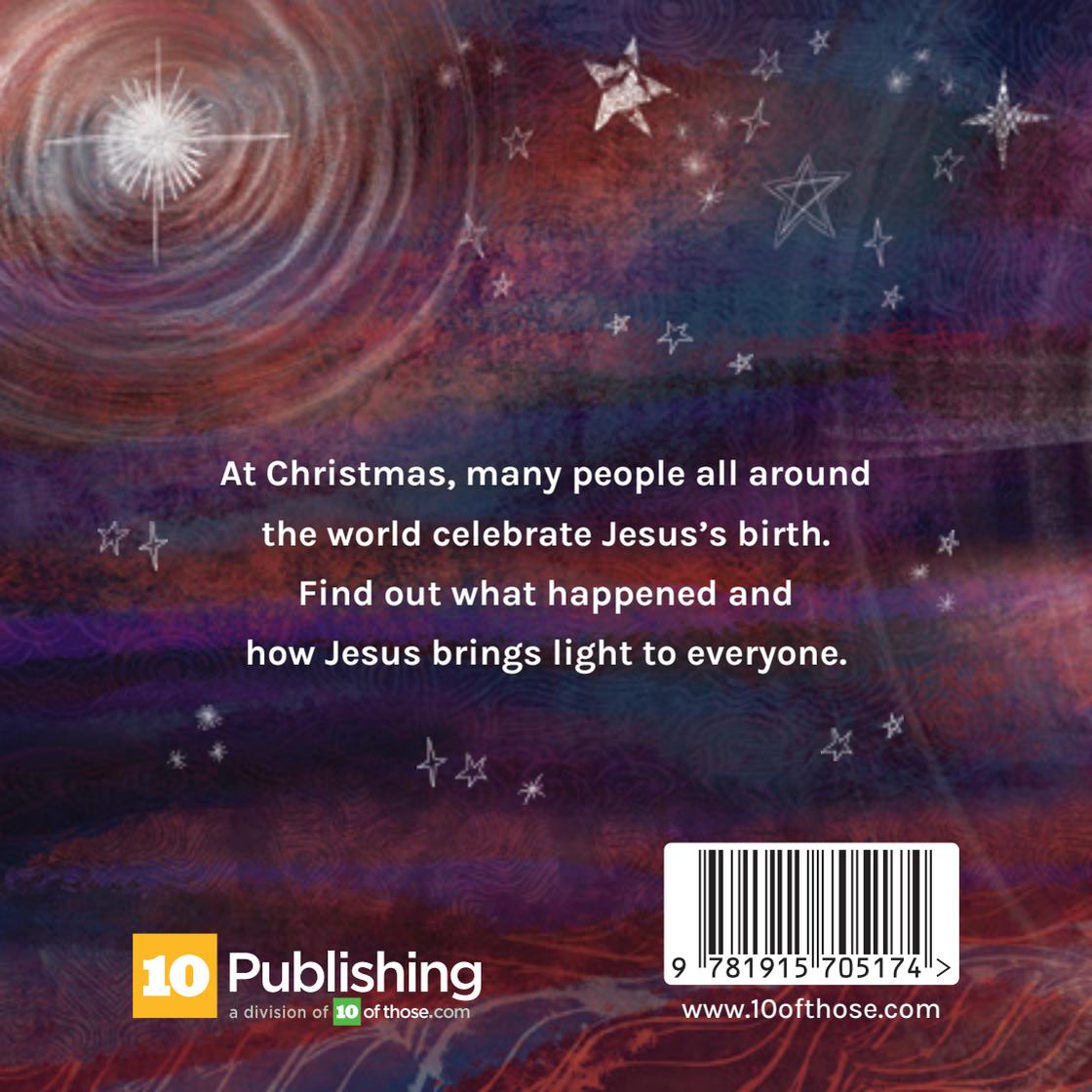
The message of
light and life
is for everyone,
everywhere!

You could go to a carol service this Christmas to find out more or you can read about the birth and life of Jesus in the Bible, in the books by Matthew and Luke.



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At Christmas, many people all around
the world celebrate Jesus's birth.
Find out what happened and
how Jesus brings light to everyone.

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