

# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

An Exposition

by

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## CHAPTER THREE

After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church on earth we find in this book the record of a second address given by the Apostle Peter.

This utterance is Jewish and national, that is, an appeal to the nation to repent and to accept the rejected JESUS as the CHRIST. Connected with this solemn appeal is the promise of national blessing. Peter promises by the Spirit of GOD "**times of refreshing**" and "**the restitution of all things**," two expressions, which describe the kingdom as promised to Israel in the Old Testament.

The condition upon which this promise of baptismal blessing is made by Peter is the repentance and conversion of the nation.

The second coming of the Lord JESUS is likewise mentioned by the Apostle. His second coming will result in the times of refreshing, and the restitution of all things. This other testimony was occasioned by the healing of the lame man. But we must look at all this more closely.

The chapter is clearly divided into two parts:

- The healing of the lame man
- The address of Peter.

The first verses of the fourth chapter belong to the third chapter. We make therefore the following division:

- I. The healing of the lame man** (Chapter 3:1-11).
- II. Peter's address and appeal** (Verses 12-26).
- III. Their arrest** (Chapter 4:1-3).
- IV. The blessed results of the given testimony** (Chapter 4:4).

We take up each of these sections separately to point out some of the leading features.

## I. The healing of the lame man.

**"Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked an alms"** (Verses 1-3).

It is not stated when this occurred. It could have been hardly on the same day on which the Holy Spirit came; it must have been a short time afterwards. Peter appears again upon the foreground as the leader. Though John was with him, there is no record of a single word which he spoke. Later we read once more of John when he went with Peter to Samaria.

If a human pen had written the Acts of the Apostles, John, no doubt, would have been more frequently mentioned. \*

\* "This is the case in *"The Mythological Acts of the Apostles,"* as old work composed of traditions concerning the Apostles.

*Peter was the chosen instrument to preach the Gospel to the circumcision and deliver to the nation this new message of repentance.*

He is the leading figure throughout the first part of the Book of Acts. Both Peter and John went together into the temple. Though the Holy Spirit had come and filled them and separated them from the nation as such, giving them a new position, yet they still continued in their Jewish customs and observances. All this was for a purpose as long as GOD's mercy lingered over Jerusalem.

The hour when they went up was the ninth hour, three in the afternoon, the usual hour for sacrifice and prayer. The people assembled for this purpose in the part of the temple called "**the Court of the Women,**" because women were only permitted to go so far and were never allowed to go beyond.

This court, 135 cubits square, was generally thronged with people at the ninth hour. The entrance to it was through a magnificent gate covered with bronze.

To this place the Apostles went.

At the same time a lame man, who had been in this condition from his birth, was being carried towards that beautiful gate. There they laid him down in his helpless condition that he might beg from those who entered in.

Daily he was to be seen; most likely for many years had he been there. Then he must have seen the Lord as He went to the temple and the miracles He did; yet this helpless beggar had not been healed. He reminds us vividly of that other lame man, who laid in the five porches and whom the Lord healed (John 5).

From the chapter which follows we learn that this lame man at the temple gate was forty years old. His condition and position is typical of the moral condition of the nation.

*Like this man, Israel was helpless with all its beautiful religious ceremonies, laying outside, with no strength to enter in.*

The age of the lame man finds a similar application; forty is the number of testing.

*The nation's condition as helpless, unable to walk in the statutes and laws of GOD, without strength, outside, and a beggar, is therefore fully picture in this lame man.*

**"And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God: and they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him. And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering" (Verses 5-11).**

The beggar had stretched out his hands to receive something from the two apostles.

What prompted Peter and John to notice this lame man among the many others, who were there begging as he did, is not mentioned. Some have suggested that there was a special look and appeal in his eyes which attracted the two servants of the Lord. Did perhaps the lame man recognize them from former visits to the temple when they came as the followers of JESUS of Nazareth?

We believe it was the Holy Spirit who directed Peter and John to look steadfastly upon him. The glorified CHRIST was about to act in His gracious power; the two apostles filled with His Spirit were His chosen and willing instruments.

Peter's word had been, **"Look on us."**

Obediently, the eyes of the lame man rest upon them. His expectation up to this point was to receive some help from their hands. He was indeed to receive something, but a far greater gift than he could have imagined. Silver and gold Peter declared he had not, but he had something else in store for him.

He now speaks in that blessed Name, which is above every other Name, in the Name of JESUS CHRIST, the Nazarene, to rise up and to walk. It was then that faith was exercised by the lame man in that Name.

The power of GOD is at once manifested. Peter takes hold of him and raised him up and immediately, not gradually, but without a moment's delay, his feet and ankle bones were made strong. The power of GOD in answer to that precious Name had come upon the lame man and he was instantly healed. He then walked and leaped and entered through the beautiful gate as a worshipper into the temple to praise GOD. What a sight it must have been!

But why was this miracle wrought at this time? It was wrought as another evidence for the unbelieving people that JESUS of Nazareth, whom they had rejected and delivered into the hands of the Gentiles, is the Messiah and their King.

It was an evidence that He who hung on the cross and had been laid into the tomb is living in heaven and that GOD's omnipotent power was revealed in answer to that Name whom they had hated without a cause.

GOD had promised to Israel His people a Kingdom, the blessings and glories of which prophet after prophet had announced. It was not to be a spiritual Kingdom, but a literal one, with the King of Righteousness ruling in the midst of them.

One great Kingdom prophecy in the Old Testament mentions the lame man, too.

**"Then shall the lame man leap as an hart"** (Isaiah 35:6).

When the King, the Son of David, the Immanuel, had appeared in their midst, preaching the nearness of that kingdom, He manifested His kingly divine power, and the blind saw, the deaf heard and the lame walked. The people rejected Him. And now once more an offer of that Kingdom is to be made to the people. But before the Apostle Peter gives the message he received from the Lord, the rejected One, who had taken His place upon His Father's throne manifests His power once more in the healing of the lame man.

And as this lame man had been perfectly healed, that he not alone walked, but leaped, with songs of praises on his lips, entering the temple, so the Lord was ready and willing to heal His people.

The lame man so wonderfully healed, leaping and praising GOD, is a picture of what the whole nation will be in a future day, when they will look upon Him whom they have pierced (Zechariah 12:10).

GOD's promise to them, still unfulfilled, is: **"I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgment and do them"** (Ezekiel 36:27).

Then will the remnant of His people break forth in singing.

**"In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise Thee; though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid, for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation"** (Isaiah 12:1, 2).

**"And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isaiah 35:10).**

The commotion in the temple was great after this miracle had taken place. There could be no mistake about it. The man who had been healed was too well known by the multitude. They recognized him at once. It was the same familiar face, which they had seen again and again at the temple gate. What a change had taken place! His helplessness was completely removed and he leaped along. Instead of the miserable cry of the mendicant, his lips shouted the praises of GOD.

A large multitude came together, greatly wondering. And now Peter opens his lips to speak to the people.

## **II. Peter's Second Address.**

**"And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all" (Verses 12-16).**

This second address of Peter is characterized by a great calmness. He was not carried away by the great excitement of the astonished multitude. He does not see why they should be astonished at what had happened to the lame man. For some time greater miracles than the healing of the blind man had been wrought in the midst of them. One had walked among them who had rebuked the demons, opened the eyes of the blind, healed all manners of diseases and raised the dead. Why should they be so astonished at the healing of the lame man?

But they not only gazed with astonishment upon the healed beggar, they also looked with wondering eyes upon the apostles themselves, as if they themselves by their own power or worth performed the healing.

This, Peter disclaims. It was GOD Himself, who had glorified His servant JESUS in the healing of this man.

Every word Peter utters, inbreathed by the Holy Spirit, shows the national Jewish character of the address. The Apostle does not speak of GOD as the Father of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, but as the GOD of Abraham, and of Isaac and Jacob. This is GOD's Name in connection with His covenant people.

In vain do we look for this name of GOD in the rest of the New Testament.

For us, as believers, GOD's Name is revealed as "**Our God and our Father, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.**"

Then of the Lord, Peter speaks as "**His Son Jesus.**" Peter, indeed, knew the Lord as the Son of the living GOD, for he had confessed Him thus at Caesarea Philippi. It was reserved for another Apostle to make known the full Glory and Sonship, both eternal and by resurrection from the dead, that is, through the Apostle Paul. The first time we find the Lord JESUS CHRIST preached as Son of GOD is in Acts 9:20, and the converted Saul of Tarsus is the preacher. In connection with the earth and His people Israel, the Lord is the servant of GOD. As such He Was predicted and described by Isaiah (chapter 53) and other prophets. That servant had been in the midst of His people and JESUS, the Nazarene, was that servant. The GOD of their Fathers had witnessed to it by healing the lame man; in it GOD had glorified His servant JESUS.

But what had they done unto that Servant of the Lord? All their guilt is flashed forth once more. They had delivered Him, and though a Gentile, convinced of His innocence, wanted to let Him go, they had denied Him. That Servant of GOD was more than innocent, the Holy One and the Righteous One He was and they had denied such a one and chosen a murderer in His place; the Author of Life (Greek: the originator of life; what a title of our blessed Lord!) they had slain.

The entire story of their wickedness and guilt is briefly rehearsed and pressed home to their hearts by the Holy Spirit. Could anyone of them deny these historical facts?

It is a significant fact that at this time many attempts are being made by the Jews to shift the responsibility of the crucifixion of the Lord JESUS CHRIST upon someone else. The strange thing is that rabbis who attempt to disprove the New Testament record of the part the Jewish people played in the death of the Lord are sometimes admitted into evangelical churches to lay their arguments before Christian people. Recently we received a pamphlet from a rabbi, in which an attempt is made to show that the Jewish people at that time had no share in the death of CHRIST. Instead of confessing the sin of the nation and the sin of the rejection of the Holy One they try to justify themselves. But the day will come when they will truly mourn for Him as one mourneth for an only son (Zechariah 12:11-13).

Peter likewise refers to the resurrection. GOD had raised him from the dead and they were the witnesses of His resurrection. Then we hear of His Name as the power which had made the man strong and gave to him this complete soundness. The power of GOD had therefore been witnessed by them.

Here we mention briefly the fact that healing of this kind was perfectly in order in connection with the preaching we have here. Nowhere do we read that in connection with the church the gift of healing should be continued. That the Lord has the same power to heal, that His Name is as powerful as ever, none can doubt.

**"And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled"** (Verses 17-18).

What tenderness and mercy breathe in these words! He addresses them as brethren, but in a different sense as the word brethren is used in the church Epistles. As a member of the same nation Peter addressed them thus and offers them mercy. Their guilt could not be denied. All was true what Peter had just uttered; but GOD in His great mercy is ready to treat their great sin as a sin of ignorance. The Lord had prayed on the cross, "**Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.**" And GOD was now ready to answer this prayer. \*

\* The application of the Cities of Refuge, to which one who had slain a man unwittingly could flee, can easily be made (Joshua 20).

Though they had cried: "**His blood be upon us and our children,**" GOD, in His mercy, delayed the carrying out of this awful wish, uttered by them in their blindness.

If they accepted this offered mercy, all their guilt would have been wiped out, but if they rejected and did not repent of what they had done, they set themselves willfully against GOD and Him whom He had sent.

And Peter now makes His appeal and gives them the promise of GOD's mercy.

**"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began"** (Verses 19-21).

*These are very interesting words and of great importance. They can only be understood in the right way if we do not lose sight of the fact to whom they were addressed, that is to Jews, and not to Gentiles.*

They are the heart of this discourse, and as such a God-given appeal and promise to the nation. If this is lost sight of, the words must lose their right meaning. The repentance which is demanded of them is an acknowledgment of the wrong they had done in denying the Holy and righteous One, a confession of their blood-guiltiness in having slain the author of life. This, of course, would result in their conversion and the blotting out of their sins as a nation.

This GOD had promised before to the nation. "**I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins**" (Isaiah 43:25).

Anticipating that glorious day in which this shall be accomplished, a day still to come, the prophet spoke the following glorious words:

**"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord has done it; shout ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest and every tree therein; for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel"** (Isaiah 44:22-23).

*It is significant that in His second address Peter has nothing more to say about the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

This is in perfect keeping with the scope of his address. It being national, the blotting out of the sins of that people is mentioned first, and in the next place, the times of refreshing and the second coming of the same JESUS who had been received into heaven. The Holy Spirit had been given and that for the empowerment of the church, the body of CHRIST.

The present address of Peter has it to do exclusively with the nation and their future, therefore the Holy Spirit, as He came on the day of Pentecost, is not mentioned. However, the promise of the Spirit in a future outpouring upon that nation is included in the promise, "**the times of refreshing.**"

*This term means a future time of blessing which is in store for GOD's earthly people.*

The other expression used, "**the times of the restitution of all things**" means practically the same as the times of refreshing.

In these two expressions the Holy Spirit gathers together the hundreds of promises He gave through the different prophets of GOD, concerning a time of great blessing for His people and through them for the nations of the world. It would be impossible to mention all these promises and in what the times of refreshing and restoration of all things consist. These days of a coming age, the kingdom age, or as we call it, because its duration will be a thousand years, the Millennium, are fully described on the pages of Old Testament prophecy.

Not alone will the nation be blessed, but Jerusalem will be a great city, the land will be restored and become the great center for blessing; the nations of the earth will receive blessing and groaning creation will be delivered from its groaning, and the curse which rests upon it.

***If we interpret the Word of Prophecy literally and cease spiritualizing it, we shall have no difficulty to behold the full meaning of the times of refreshing and the restitution of all things.***

The latter word does not include a restoration of the wicked dead, a second chance for those who passed out of this life in an unsaved condition. A false teaching refers to this passage as one of the arguments for the restoration of the wicked dead, including even Sodom and Gomorrah. But when did ever a prophet of GOD teach the restitution of the wicked dead?

The prophets predicted the restoration of all things, but that restoration is clearly defined as concerning the things on the earth and not the beings which have passed out of this life.

Not only in the Old Testament do we find a description of what is to come for Israel, the nations and creation, but elsewhere in the New Testament these times of refreshing and restoration of all things are clearly indicated. See Matthew 19:28; Romans 8:19-23; Ephesians 1:10, etc.

But between these two words of promise of what shall be Israel's portion if they repent, stands another fact:

It is the second coming of JESUS CHRIST.

This is a great fundamental passage of that great doctrine, the second coming of CHRIST. Peter declares that GOD is going to send JESUS CHRIST. This must mean a second coming.

To teach this in the clearest manner, he adds that the heavens received Him, but they will not retain Him forever. He has gone into the heavens till the true restoration of all things comes.

***The second coming of CHRIST will result in the times of refreshing and restoration of all things.***

This event is, of course, His visible and glorious coming back to earth again, to the Mount of Olives from where He ascended, and for the deliverance and blessing of His earthly people.

The coming of the Lord for His church as revealed through the Apostle Paul in I Thessalonians 4:13-18 must be distinguished from this visible return to the earth. The resurrected and living saints will be caught up together in clouds to meet the Lord in the air, into which the Lord descends when He redeems His promise to His own: **"I will come again and receive you unto myself."**

Of this Peter had no knowledge at all when he delivered this testimony to the nation. What he speaks of is the coming of CHRIST in power and glory to establish His Kingdom in the midst of His people to extend over the entire earth, so that the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters the deep. Of that coming prophets had spoken again and again. Indeed, it is impossible to separate in the prophetic Word the blessings promised for Israel, the nations and creation and the coming of CHRIST in glory as the King of kings.

All this is so plain that it seems almost impossible for any man not to see the teaching of the pre-millennial coming of CHRIST, that there can be no age of blessing, no millennium, before CHRIST has returned.

And yet one of the most learned men and Bible expositor, Dr. John Lightfoot, labors hard to explain away the literal coming of CHRIST, whom the heavens received. The words of this learned man are the weakest we have ever seen. He says in his *Horae Hebraicae* on this passage the following:

"Was that JESUS, whom we have crucified, the true CHRIST? (The Jews would ask after hearing Peter). Then is all our hope for refreshing by the Messiah vanished, because He Himself is vanished and gone. Then our expectation as to the consolation of Israel is at an end, because he who should be our consolation is perished. Not so (saith Peter) but the Messiah, and the refreshing by Him, shall be restored to you if you will repent; yet so that He Himself shall continue in heaven. He shall be sent to you in His refreshing and consolatory Word, and in His benefits if you repent."

This great scholar allowed himself a great liberty with the Word of GOD and teaches the very opposite which Peter spoke to the nation.

The offer of GOD through Peter and his message to the nation contains the great revealed purposes of GOD, as spoken by the mouth of His prophets since time began. Sometimes it is asked, What would have happened if the nation had then repented? Undoubtedly all would then have come to pass. In rapid succession all the events preceding the return of the Lord as recorded in the prophets Would have come to pass and then He would have come and brought the restoration of all things. This, however, was not in the purpose of GOD.

He knew that Israel would reject this offer. The Lord had predicted it likewise. The prophets spoke of the dispersion of the nation and a long period of judgment for them.

*This period is the present age, during which Israel is set aside nationally, and at the same time GOD calls out a people for His Name from the Gentiles, that is the church.*

This may end at any time. We are living in significant days, surrounded by signs which herald the speedy ending of this present age. Then, once more, after the completion and removal of the church from earth, will Israel hear the message concerning the Kingdom. There will then be the repentance of a national remnant, the return of the Lord JESUS CHRIST and the times of refreshing and restoration of all things as the result of His coming.

**"For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his servant Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away everyone of you from his iniquities" (Verses 22-26).**

Next Peter mentions Moses, whom the nation held in such great reverence that they called him, and still do so, **"Moses our teacher."**

Moses had spoken in Deuteronomy of another prophet whom the Lord would raise up. GOD promised that He would put His words into the mouth of the prophet.

**"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him."** (Deuteronomy 18:19).

The one of whom Moses spoke, one greater than himself, was none other than CHRIST.

That prophet had spoken and they had not heard. The threatening Word of the Lord was over them as a nation.

Then he reminds them of the testimonies of the prophets beginning with Samuel, who all had announced these days.

He closes with an appeal, telling them that they are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant and that it is first to them that GOD had raised His servant up. He was ready to bless them and turn every one from their iniquity.

This second address of Peter is much shorter than the one delivered by him on the day of Pentecost and yet the brief words, which took a few minutes to deliver, contain the greatest truths.

The Name of the Lord is mentioned by Peter in seven different forms:

- As the Son of GOD,
- The Holy One,
- The Righteous One,
- The Author of Life,
- The CHRIST of GOD,
- The Prophet and
- The Seed of Abraham.

Repentance, Conversion, the Blotting out of sins, the second coming of CHRIST, the coming age and its blessing, besides the suffering, death and resurrection of the Lord JESUS CHRIST are stated.

But would they heed these solemn words?

- Do we hear the multitude crying out, "**What shall we do?**"
- Do they bow in true repentance?

The address of Peter and the words of John, which the Holy Spirit has not put on record, were not finished, when an interruption took place.

While they were yet speaking something happened. This we read in the next paragraph, with which the fourth chapter begins.

### **III. Their Arrest.**

**"And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide"** (Chapter 4:1-3).

The large number of people, the news of the healing of the lame man and that the two men were addressing the people in Solomon's porch, attracted the attention of the priests and the captain of the temple.

The latter was a leading figure in the temple with much authority; it is probable that he had a rank next to the high priest.

The enemy begins now his acts and the first indication is given that the offer GOD's mercy was making to the nation would not be accepted.

The Holy Spirit was acting mightily through the spoken Word, but these ecclesiastical leaders were hardening their hearts against the Word and the Spirit of GOD. The hate against that blessed Name broke out anew under the satanic power to which they had yielded. Soon it became evident that blindness is to become their portion. And the Sadducees came too.

Though not much has been said on the resurrection, yet these rationalists, or as we would call them today, "higher critics," were much distressed because they preached JESUS and the resurrection.

The next step is the arrest and imprisonment of the two apostles.

Rough hands seize them. Persecution began. Of the Apostles we read nothing else. They submitted. The power of the Holy Spirit now manifested itself in a new way with them. They could suffer and perhaps with great joy, in perfect peace, they allowed themselves to be taken away.

#### **IV. The Result of the Testimony.**

**"Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand"** (Verse 4).

Their labor had not been in vain. GOD's power had accompanied the Word; a remnant heard and believed. The men are numbered and that is specifically a Jewish thing and a feature of the Kingdom.

This is the last time that the converts are numbered.

There can be no numbering in this church age; no one knows the number of the members of the body of CHRIST, but GOD only. The numbering is only on Kingdom ground.

In the Gospels we have two miraculous draughts of fishes. The one in the Gospel of Luke before the cross where the net broke and the fishes were not numbered refers to the present age. The one in the Gospel of John after the resurrection of CHRIST, with Peter as leader, when the net did not break and the fishes are numbered, refers to the Kingdom.

~ end of chapter 3 ~

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