

THE GLORIES OF CHRIST IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

by

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BOOK THREE

THE OFFICIAL GLORIES OF CHRIST

CHAPTER THREE

HIS HOUSE – HIS REST – HIS WORD

Hebrews 3:1-4:13

“By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Hebrews 9:12).

“Wherefore he is able also to, save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 1:25).

The Apostle and High Priest

The ministry of succor from heaven, mentioned at the close of chapter 2, introduces a new glory of Christ—that of His High Priestly grace, which the epistle develops from this point on through 10:18. It is one of our Lord’s official glories, presented in this book in all its beauty and majesty. He is spoken of as **“a great high priest that is passed into the heavens”** (4:14), has entered into heaven (6:20), is **“made higher than the heavens”** (7:26), and is now seated **“on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens”** (8:1).

The very first verse of chapter 3 exhorts the Hebrew Christians to consider Christ Jesus in this merciful and faithful ministry:

“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession.”

Here the Holy Spirit addresses believers as **“holy brethren”** because they are one with the holiness of the Sanctifier. He urges them to consider the Lord Jesus in the twofold character of Apostle and High Priest.

- In chapter 1 He is the *Apostle*—God’s spokesman to us; for an apostle is “*one sent*.”
- In chapter 2 He is *High Priest*—our spokesman with God.

We partake of a heavenly calling, sharing in His present heavenly life, even as He when here partook of our earthly condition. And we are to consider His present ministry. His present faithfulness is set before us for our adoring consideration:

1. As Apostle He exercises the ministry of bringing to us God’s Word.
2. As High Priest He takes our burdens and problems to God.

A Son Over His Own House—Better Than Moses 3:1-6

In this ministry He eclipses Moses, the greatest figure of the old covenant. Moses was faithful as a servant in all of God’s house, that is, the Jewish Tabernacle. Our Lord is faithful as a Son over His own house (vv. 5, 6). Moses was in the house; the Son is over the house.

“**He that built all things is God**”; and He intends finally to make the universe, of which He was the Builder, His house. In the meantime, we are His house (v. 6), as seen in type in the Tabernacle in the wilderness. Thus, as Hebrews 10:21 tells us, we have “**an high priest over the house of God**,” a spiritual house, not made by hands. (Cf. Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:5).

The Hebrews, to whom this epistle was addressed, were familiar with their own Old Testament Scriptures; therefore, they did not need to be reminded that the words of Hebrews 3:2 were quoted from Numbers 12:7: “**My servant Moses . . . is faithful in all mine house.**”

They knew the story of that chapter from the wilderness wanderings. If you are not familiar with it, read it just here to see how God uttered these words of approval concerning Moses when “**Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married**” (Numbers 12:1). They had also accused their brother of assuming too much authority, “**and the Lord heard it.**”

Then it was that the Lord God came down in the pillar of cloud, rebuked Miriam and Aaron, commended Moses for his meekness and faithfulness, and smote Miriam with leprosy. Only the sacred office which he held as high priest prevented Aaron from a similar chastisement, for no leper could be a priest in Israel (Leviticus 21:16-22:4).

Moses was exceedingly faithful in God’s house. Did he not build the Tabernacle “**according to the pattern**” which God showed him in the mount (Exodus 25:40; Hebrews 8:5)? Did he not instruct and lead the priests and the people in the God-given worship which foreshadowed the Saviour to come? The Hebrews of apostolic times knew all this. They had every reason to honor and love the memory of Moses. But Christ Jesus was “**worthy of more glory than Moses.**” He “**was faithful to him that appointed him**” (3:2), faithful to the Father in fulfilling the work which He came to earth to accomplish. He was faithful in becoming the all-sufficient Sacrifice for sinners, and He is faithful in His present ministry of intercession for His redeemed.

“If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself” (II Timothy 2:13),

The Jewish Tabernacle—A Type of Christ and His Church

When the Holy Spirit, in 3:1-6, referred to Moses' faithfulness in the Jewish Tabernacle to illustrate our Lord's greater faithfulness in His house, which is His Church, He was speaking of history familiar to the Hebrew Christians. They knew the story of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, written in Exodus 25-40, as well as the record of the ministry of the priests and Levites in that sanctuary, set forth in Leviticus. And we must know these portions of the Old Testament if we would understand the Epistle to the Hebrews.

When we study chapters 8 and 9 of this book, we shall see that the inspired writer has much to say about the Jewish Tabernacle in contrast with **“the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man”** (8:2).

Therefore, consider the significance of this remarkable, prophetic message—that the Tabernacle is a type of Christ and His Church.

The very pieces of furniture were placed in the form of a cross, and each one spoke of the promised Redeemer:

1. *In the outer court:*

The brazen altar before the gate foreshadowed Calvary's cross, where the blood of the Lamb of God was shed; whereas the brazen laver spoke of Christ, the believer's Cleanser from the defilement of sin.

2. *In the Holy Place:*

The golden candlestick was a type of Christ, the Light of the world; the table of showbread, of Christ, the Bread of life; the golden altar of incense, of Christ, our Advocate and Intercessor.

3. *In the Holy of Holies:*

Above the Ark of the Covenant, for which the mercy seat of pure gold was a covering, God dwelt in the pillar of cloud and fire between the two cherubim of gold.

In the Ark were the tables of stone, on which the Ten Commandments were written with the finger of God. Israel had broken that holy law, and the penalty was death; but hiding the broken law from view was the blood-sprinkled mercy seat.

Israel's high Priest, representing his people, could enter the Holy of Holies once a year, on the Day of Atonement, **“not without blood,”** which he sprinkled on and before the mercy seat for his own sins and the sins of all Israel. By faith in the promised Redeemer he could enter into the very presence of God, and not die.

“When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son” to be **“a propitiation,”** or mercy seat, **“for the remission of sins”** (Galatians 4:4 Romans 3:25).

When Israel’s Great High Priest entered into the true Holy of Holies, even heaven itself, once for all, presenting His own blood for the sins of His people—He had no sin in Him, for which to atone—then He opened the way into the very throne-room of God. And by faith in His finished work on Calvary, every redeemed sinner of every age and of every nation can enter there—and not die! He shall live forever in the presence of the holy God who gave His life a ransom for many.

How faithful is the Lord Jesus Christ—faithful to the Father who appointed Him to His Priestly office; faithful to His redeemed, whom He represents at the throne of grace! And still He abideth faithful!

While the typical teaching concerning the Tabernacle has to do primarily with the glories of Christ, the Church also is seen in union with Him as **“an habitation of God through the Spirit”** (Ephesians 2:19-22). The sanctuary in the wilderness was made of forty-eight boards of acacia wood, covered with gold, set upright in sockets of silver, and held firmly together by gold-covered bars, which were passed through rings of gold.

Over this framework the coverings of the tent of the congregation were spread. Those boards, once acacia trees, having been severed from the earth and stripped of their natural beauty, were given a beauty not their own—pure gold. Thus they represent believers in Christ, who were crucified with Him and clothed in the beauty of His righteousness when they became members of His body, which is **“the temple of the Holy Spirit”** (I Corinthians 3:16; 6:19).

The boards of the Tabernacle rested in sockets of silver, obtained from the redemption money of the children of Israel (Exodus 30:11-16). Likewise, believers in the Lord Jesus rest in Him who is the Foundation Stone of the Church, even as they become living stones in that spiritual house that shall abide for all eternity (I Corinthians 3:11; I Peter 2:5-8).

As the forty-eight boards of the Tabernacle were securely fastened together with gold-covered bars, so individual Christians form one body, of which Christ is the Head, eternally united one to another in the bond of faith, eternally secure in Him.

The Jewish Tabernacle was very costly; some have estimated its value in millions of dollars. Yet no earthly sum can compare with the price our Lord paid for His Bride when He shed His blood for her on the accursed tree (I Corinthians 6:20; I Peter 1:18, 19).

The sons of Aaron, priests, were also prophetic of Christians, believer-priests in the Church, even as Aaron was a type of Christ, our Great High Priest; for it is the believer’s privilege and responsibility to tell the story of the one sufficient sacrifice of the Lamb of God, and to offer the spiritual sacrifice of prayer and praise and fruitfulness in His service (Romans 12:1; Philippians 4:18; I Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:5, 6; Hebrews 13:15, 16).

The glory of God in the pillar of cloud and fire dwelt in the Tabernacle, in the midst, of His people, even as the crucified and risen Lord is “**in the midst**” wherever two or three are gathered together in His name (Matthew 18:20; Revelation 1:13).

These are some of the reasons the Holy Spirit wrote, saying that the Lord Jesus is “**worthy of more glory than Moses, who was faithful**” in all God’s house. Our Lord’s faithfulness in the household of God cannot be measured!

(For a detailed study of the Jewish Tabernacle and its typical significance, see the Bibliography at the back of this text).

The Rest of God

3:7-4:11

In 3:7-4:13 there is a digression that forms one of several parenthetical passages of the epistle, given to warn, exhort and encourage the believer in Christ. God’s rest is the theme of 3:7-4:11; His Word is the subject of 4:12, 13. Our merciful and faithful High Priest can and will lead us into His rest (4:14-16), of which His creation rest (4:3, 4) and the Canaan rest (4:8) were types.

In accomplishing this, He uses His Word as a living and powerful instrument (4:12, 13), that is, a means to lead us into His eternal rest. This experience may be realized now by faith, and it will be completely enjoyed by those who trust Him when they are in His presence in heaven forevermore.

Unless you are very sure that you know the story of Numbers 13 and 14, turn now to those chapters and read them before you continue with this lesson. Then read Psalm 95:7-11, written by David some four hundred years later than the events described in Numbers 13, 14. Having done that, you will be ready to link the “**wherefore**” of Hebrews 3:7 with 3:12 to get the full force of the warning written here.

Now read this entire section concerning the rest of God (3:7-4:11), thinking of its subdivisions as follows; or you may prefer your own outline; indeed, because of the repetition for emphasis, it is difficult to make a fixed division of some of these verses.

3:7-11—The quotation from Psalm 95:1-11

3:12-15—The warning against apostasy in apostolic times

3:16-19— The example of Israel’s unbelief in the wilderness

4:1, 2 — Further warning and exhortation

4:3-10 — The contrast between God’s rest and:

(1) His creation rest and

(2) The Canaan rest

4:11—Yet further exhortation

The Israelites under Moses' leadership were tested in the wilderness. Except for Caleb and Joshua (Hebrews 3:16b), all the males who were twenty years of age when they left Egypt (cf. Numbers 14:29 with Numbers 1:19, 20) failed to enter into the Canaan rest God had for them, because of their unbelief.

Likewise, the Hebrew Christians of apostolic times were similarly tested—so also are we tested today. Besides, even Canaan did not prove to be the rest which God has for His people. Rest for Israel in the land was rendered impossible because of their evil behavior there, because of their lack of faith in **“the gospel preached . . . unto them”** (4:2) concerning the Saviour to come.

Hence the exhortation which God addressed to the children of Israel through David (4:7; cf. Psalm 95:7-11) many years after they had entered into the land, warning them lest they should miss God's rest through unbelief, as their fathers had done in the wilderness. What God said then to Israel in Canaan in the days of David, the Holy Spirit reiterated to the Hebrew Christians in apostolic times; and He speaks the same words to us today as God's “voice” of warning, comfort and hope.

Now look again at chapter 4 for the heart of this message concerning the rest of God:

1. *God's creation rest is a type of His rest in Christ.*

**“For we which have believed do enter into that rest, as he hath said,
As I have sworn in my wrath,
If they shall enter into my rest:
Although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in
a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day
from all his works”** (Hebrews 4:3, 4; cf. Genesis 2:2).

Here the Holy Spirit uses God's seventh-day rest in a finished creation as a type of His rest in the finished work of Christ in redemption.

“God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31).

Then He rested on the seventh day. He found satisfaction also in His fellowship with man, whom He had made in His own image. But that rest was disturbed by the fall of man; that fellowship was broken by the entrance of sin into the human heart. And God's love cannot rest in a world full of sin and sorrow and death. Only in the redemptive work of His beloved Son can God rest; only there can His children find rest unto their souls.

A finished creation—rest—sin—and God's eternal rest in a finished redemption—that is the message of this portion of Scripture.

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (II Corinthians 5:17).

2. *God's rest in Christ is better than Israel's Canaan rest under Joshua.*

The word “**Jesus**” in 4:8 is the Greek for the Hebrew name “**Joshua**,” and it means “*Saviour*” or “*Deliverer*.” Thus Joshua, in delivering his people from the wilderness wanderings, and in leading them into the Promised Land (4:8), is a type of Christ, whose name is called Jesus because He saves His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21) and leads them on to glory. He is Joshua’s Saviour and Deliverer, superior by far to that great leader of God’s chosen people, even as His rest is better than the Canaan rest ever could have been to Israel.

3. *God's rest in Christ “remaineth . . . for the people of God.”*

The real rest of God, the real rest which He has for His people, is in Christ Jesus. Just as the pillar of cloud and fire rested upon the blood-sprinkled mercy seat, so God finds in Christ a resting place for His glory that will never be disturbed throughout eternity. And He offers it to all who will receive it as the gift of His love. It is described in Hebrews 4:9, 10, the present rest of faith on the part of the believer, which guarantees the future, eternal Sabbath at the end of the temptations, toils and tests of the wilderness journey:

“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.”

The thought is that God’s rest, into which He invites us, has not been exhausted or fully realized by any experience in the past. Neither the seventh day after creation nor the land of Canaan had done justice to it; for centuries afterward, in the days of David, God still spoke of “**another day**” of rest to be enjoyed (4:8). We are living in a day when it may be a present experience.

“Today if ye shall hear his voice, Harden not your hearts” (3:7, 15; 4:7; cf. Psalm 95:7, 8).
“We which have believed do enter into rest” (4:3),

We have the *rest of salvation* in believing in Christ (Matthew 11:28); and we have the *rest of consecration* under His yoke (Matthew 11:29, 30). It was Augustine who said, “Lord, Thou hast made us for Thyself; and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee.”

It is not the rest of quietistic passivity; for when God rested on the seventh day, He continued working in the maintenance of creation, in providence and in history. Our Lord, too, rests from His finished work, consummated in His death; but He is blessedly active in His heavenly life as our Intercessor. However, we rest from our own works (4:10); our restless schemings and plannings and strivings are hushed at last.

We can add nothing to the finished work of Christ; it is the free gift of God’s grace (See Ephesians 2:8, 9; Titus 3:5). To be sure, our good works should follow our salvation; but they can never be the means of entrance into the eternal rest of God.

“Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after [or ‘into’] the same example of unbelief” (4:11).

The thought of 4:11 is not that believers are to “labor” for that rest, but that they are to give diligence to enter into it by faith, to be sincere in their confession of Christ. To the enlightened, but unregenerated, Hebrew of the early Christian era it was a warning lest he have an intellectual knowledge about Christ, yet fail to rest his soul’s salvation in the finished work of Christ—a warning against apostasy. To the early Hebrew Christian it was an exhortation to yieldedness to the perfect will of God. The inspired writer seems to have been saying: “*Israel missed God’s rest in the days of Moses and Joshua and David. Will you miss it also? ‘Today . . . hear his voice . . . Harden not your hearts’!*”

There is a striking analogy between Israel’s experience in the wilderness and that of the Hebrews in apostolic times.

In the days of Moses the nation was delivered from bondage in Egypt; in the Christian era, from bondage to Judaism. Israel left Egypt on the Passover night with high hopes; many Hebrews professed the name of Christ with zeal. But Israel murmured and, because of testings in the wilderness, wanted to return to Egypt (Numbers 14:4); the enlightened, but unregenerated, Jews of apostolic times were in danger of returning to Judaism, with its Temple worship, for persecution of Christian Jews was bitter and severe.

Those Israelites who murmured against God at Kadesh-barnea perished in the wilderness; the Hebrews to whom this epistle was addressed, as well as all men of every age, would be lost if they persisted in unbelief.

Thank God! He always has a Moses, a Joshua and a Caleb! They are the true companions of Christ (Hebrews 3:14) who continue steadfast:

- a. *They learn subjection to the will of God in the wilderness (3:7-19).*
- b. *They have faith in God’s ability to fulfill His promise (4:3-10).*
- c. *They heed the Word of God (4:12, 13).*

The Word of God

4:12, 13

In connection with the solemn warning against the possibility of missing God’s rest, the living, powerful, omniscient Word of God is brought into the discussion:

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (4:12, 13).

The living Word of God searches us and exposes whatever prevents our present and future entering into God’s purpose for us. That is to say, the Word within us acts like a two-edged sword, sharper than any made by hand. And who can escape its scrutiny?

It is, as the word ‘**discerner**’ implies, the supreme critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart. It is God’s “**voice**,” the safeguard against failure to enter into His rest. It tells us of the Living Word who was made flesh, and dwelt among us (John 1:14). It tells us of Him who said,

“**Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest**” (Matthew 11:28).

But when we are thus judged by this infallible discerner of the thoughts of our hearts, we are not left with this inward dissection of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow as the final source of help. We are directed to the Great High Priest, the Son of God, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities (4:14-16). Therefore, we may “**come boldly unto the throne of grace**” to “**obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.**”

Our Great High Priest can carry His people through all the dangers and snares of the wilderness, having gone through them Himself in His sinless human experiences on earth (Our next lesson will be devoted entirely to this blessed truth).

Some Personal Questions

How much time do you spend each day in meditation on the glory of Christ’s person and the sufficiency of His work? “**Consider . . . Christ Jesus**” (3:1).

How faithful, how joyful is your Christian testimony in a sin-sick world (3:6, 14)?

Is there “**in any of you an evil heart of unbelief**,” evidenced by worry and anxiety over the providences of God (3:12)?

Has your heart become “**hardened through the deceitfulness of sin**” (3:13)?

Have you ceased from your own works as a means of salvation? Have you entered by faith into God’s rest in Christ Jesus (4:9, 10)?

Do you love the Bible above all other books? Dare you doubt that it is the very Word of God—inspired by His Holy Spirit, infallible, authoritative, God’s voice to you (4:12, 13)? Do you show your love for it by daily, consistent study of its sacred pages?

Assignment for Exam 3

1. Note how often the inspired writer refers to God’s rest as: “**my rest**,” “**his rest**,” “**rest**,” “**that rest**.”
2. Note the frequent use of the contrasting words “**unbelief**” and “**faith**.”
3. Can you tell how God preached “**the gospel**” to Israel in the wilderness, centuries before Christ was born in Bethlehem? (Cf. Galatians 3:8.)

Remember always that the Old Testament saints were saved by faith in the Saviour to come, even as New Testament saints have been saved by faith in Him who fulfilled the promises of the Old Testament concerning His coming to die for sinners.

Here are a few of these prophecies, given before Israel's failure to enter Canaan under Moses' leadership:

- The virgin birth of Christ (Genesis 3:15);
- The promise to Abraham that the Redeemer should come through his family (Genesis 12:1-3);
- Christ promised through the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10);
- Some prophetic types of Christ: the Passover (Exodus 12; I Corinthians 5:7);
- The manna (Exodus 16; John 6);
- The smitten rock (Exodus 17:5-7; Isaiah 53:4; I Corinthians 10:4; John 7:37-39);
- The Tabernacle; the offerings and feasts of the Lord, given in Leviticus.

4. Complete Exam 3.

CHAPTER THREE

NOTE: PLEASE DO NOT CONTACT THE MOODY CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL FOR GRADING OF YOUR EXAMS – IF YOU WISH TO COMPLETE THEM, CONSIDER THEM AS AN OPEN BOOK EXAM

1. In the right-hand margin write "True" or "False" after each of the following statements. (22 points)

- a. Christ, as the Apostle, is God's Spokesman to us. _____
- b. The Lord pitched "the true tabernacle." _____
- c. The Tabernacle in the wilderness was pitched by Aaron's sons. _____
- d. Christ, as High Priest, is our Spokesman with God. _____
- e. Christ's ministry for believers ended with His ascension. _____
- f. The Jewish Tabernacle was a type of Christ and His Church. _____
- g. On the Day of Atonement ashes were sprinkled on the mercy seat. _____
- h. Aaron first had to offer a sacrifice for his own sins, then for the people's. _____
- i. The Israelites in the wilderness could not enter into God's rest because of unbelief. _____
- j. The forty years spent in the wilderness were a type of God's rest. _____
- k. Fellowship between God and man has never really been broken. _____

2. List the articles of furniture in the Tabernacle and outer court according to their position. (12 points)

- a. Outer court _____
- b. Holy Place _____
- c. Holy of Holies _____

Match the following items associated with the Tabernacle (column 1) With the antitype (column 2) by placing the correct letter from column 1 in the appropriate blank in column 2. (12 points)

Column 1	Column 2
a. Brazen laver	(1) Light of the World
b. Altar of incense	(2) Broken law
c. Boards of acacia wood	(3) Believer's Cleanser from sin
d. Tablets of stone	(4) Believers in Christ
e. Animal sacrifices	(5) Christ's intercessory work
f. Golden candlestick	(6) The Lamb of God

4. In the blank space write the letter of the correct answer. (9 points)

(1) In the Hebrew Tabernacle God dwelt in

- (a) The Holy Place
- (b) The outer court
- (c) The altar of incense
- (d) The pillar of cloud and fire
- (2) Israel's high priest entered the Holy of Holies _____

- (a) Once a year
- (b) Once a month
- (c) Whenever sin was committed
- (d) Every morning

(3) The high priest took with him into the Holy of Holies _____

- (a) Nothing
- (b) An animal to sacrifice
- (c) A change of raiment
- (d) Blood _____

5. In the blank space write the letter of the statement which does not apply. (9 points)

(1)

- (a) Moses was a faithful servant
- (b) Moses served in Aaron's house
- (c) Christ is faithful as the Son
- (d) Christ serves over His own house

(2)

- (a) God rested the seventh day
- (b) God rested because He was tired
- (c) God rested because His work of creation was finished
- (d) God rested from all His works

(3)

- (a) God's rest was broken by sin
- (b) God could not continue His rest until the sin question was settled
- (c) The Lord Jesus restored God's rest by His work on the cross
- (d) God is still unable to rest

(4)

- (a) The Israelites that entered Canaan entered into rest
- (b) Joshua was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ
- (c) Jesus said, "Come unto me.. .and I will give you rest"
- (d) Caleb and Joshua failed to enter into the Canaan rest

6. Name the three ways suggested in this lesson whereby the true companions of Christ continue steadfast. (9 points)

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

7. The Word of God is His "voice" of warning to us, lest we also miss God's rest. Write from memory Hebrews 4:12, 13, in which this truth is set forth. (5 points)

8. a. Name four occasions when God preached “the gospel” (4:2) unto Israel in the days of Moses, or prior to that time. (16 points)

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____
- (4) _____

b. List the four groups of beings or individuals compared with the Son of God in the first four chapters of Hebrews to prove that He is superior to the greatest personages in Judaism—”better than” all His creatures.

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____
- (4) _____

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

9. State what you are depending on for salvation. (6 points)

~ end of chapter 3 ~

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