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HAS THE SECOND COMING OCCURRED?

By W. Terry Varner



This arch was erected in Rome to commemorate the victory of the Roman army over Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

Has the Second Coming Occurred?

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A most NEW and NOVEL doctrine among the churches of Christ is the teaching that "all final or end-time things" (eschatology) all occurred in A. D. 70 in the destruction of Jerusalem. The theory has been formulated, crystallized, and perpetrated among the brethren by Max R. King, Warren, OH. ¹

The error and heretical nature of the A. D. 70 theory can be seen in which all doctrine of early New Testament Christianity from the day of Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2) and all attendant doctrine related to the second coming is dovetailed, as occurring, into A. D. 70 in the fall of Jerusalem. The consequents are: (1) that all biblical prophecy is fulfilled, (2) a demotion of the efficacy of the cross, and (3) an unscriptural magnification of the destruction of Jerusalem in all redemptive matters, both in the Christian era and eternity.

How Is It All Possible?

The unique and extreme hermeneutic centering in A.D. 70 is done by a series of faulty hermeneutical (interpretive) quirks: (1) King's "key" is that "Each Israel is dealt with according to her nature, whether fleshly or spiritual."² In other words, the "key" of understanding the A.D. 70 hermeneutic is that (a) all things relating to national Israel (fleshly Israel) must be understood by a LITERAL hermeneutic and (b) all things relating to the church (spiritual Israel) must be understood by a SPIRITUAL HERMENEUTIC. This is discussed fuller in our volume on the A. D. 70 theory in which we show that the A. D. 70 theory is not consistent in applying this "key."³ (2) The "KEY" required the proponents to redefine biblical terms so that an entirely new biblical vocabulary resulted: e. g. (a) "quick and dead" (2 Tim. 4:1) means "Jews and Gentiles,"⁴ (b) "graves" (John 5:28,29) means "national Israel,"⁵ (c) "word" (2 Tim. 4:10; 2 John 2:15-18) means "Judaism,"⁶ (d) "sons of Levi" means "Christians,"⁷ and (e) "dead men" means "gospel saints."⁸ (3) Their writings are filled with highly subjective terms such as: "it is the author's belief, . . . more feasible. . . . in the author's judgment. . . . It is reasonable. therefore to assume . . . some might. . . ."

perhaps . . . It also is possible . . . ” 9

Roy Deaver observes, “There are no laws or rules of interpretation according to the spiritual method of interpretation.”¹⁰ The lack of clarity and understanding of the A.D. 70 theory is acknowledged as being “vulnerable to misunderstanding.”¹¹

The Second Coming

The second coming of Christ is THE MAJOR POINT in King’s NEW spiritual hermeneutic and is an event declared as occurring and complete in A. D. 70 with “no scriptural basis for extending the second coming of Christ beyond the fall of Jerusalem.”¹²

In making the second (final) coming of Christ occur in A. D. 70, a number of errors have been spawned concerning ALL end-time statements.

(1) SECOND COMING: It is argued that the second (final) coming of Christ occurred in A. D. 70 because “The New Testament pointed consistently to the imminent coming of Christ.”¹³

These brethren have confused the terms (a) “imminent” meaning “likely to happen without delay, impending, threatening” and (b) “eminent” meaning “rising above other things, prominent, exalted, outstanding.”¹⁴

The Bible does not speak of an "imminent" return of Christ. To so speak contradicts: (a) that none but the Father knew the time of His coming (Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32), (b) the statements of Paul and Peter that His coming would be as a "thief," i.e., unexpected, unannounced, sudden (cf. 1 Thess. 5:1-2; 2 Peter 3:10), and (c) "quickly" as in Revelation 22:7, 12, 20, which does not mean "immediately," but is a Greek adverb (tachy) meaning "swiftly speedily" rather than "soon."¹⁵ (See the cognate usage in Luke 18:8.)

Closely aligned to their "imminency" argument is an argument from **MELLO**, translated "about or at hand." It is reasoned that mello "Always (emphasis mine. WTV) means 'I am about to,' regardless of the way it is used."¹⁶ However, a close examination of the use of mello will not substantiate this claim: (1) "And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was about (mello) to come" (Matt. 11:14). This is a reference to John the Baptist from Malachi 4:5 and covering a time span of about 400 years. (2) Mello is used twice in Acts 26:22-23 in reference to the teaching of Moses and the Old Testament prophets concerning the coming of the Messiah. From Moses to the birth of Christ is about 1500 years. (3) Romans 5:14 speaks of Adam as a figure or type of Christ with a time period of centuries. (4) The Law of

Moses is spoken of as "a shadow of good things to come (mello)" (Heb. 10:1) and involves the entire time period of the Law of Moses, beginning centuries before Christ and New Testament Christianity.

It is the case that the A.D. 70 brethren have set aside all sane, logical scholarship and believe what they want by redefining terms to fit their theory. In fact, they acknowledge the change is from their study and have accused the Greek lexicographers of deceit: "The lexicons have done this in extension to weaken the basic meaning of the term (mello, WTV) which in turn strengthens their views on a 'Know not the day or hour' concept on Biblical eschatology."¹⁷

(2) REMISSION OF SINS: It is argued that the blood of Christ on the cross did not accomplish redemption or the REMISSION OF SINS from Acts 2 until A. D. 70. King argues that "redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38) and "the blotting out of sins" (Acts 3:19-21) "would be accomplished in Christ's end-of-the-age parousia (second (final) coming, WTV) (Matt. 24:1-3."¹⁸ Acts 2:38 clearly teaches the purpose of baptism was "for (eis) the remission of sins." The remission of sins occurred at that time! The A. D. 70 advocates argue that "for" (eis) does "not resolve the time (when?)."¹⁹ Their

argument is that the TIME (when) of the remission of sins for those Jews on the Day of Pentecost, and for ALL who were baptized until A. D. 70, DID NOT occur until the destruction of Jerusalem. They had remission in prospect, not in reality. In other words, one could have been baptized in Acts 2, died, and never realized he had forgiveness. There is nothing in Peter's sermon in Acts 2 telling them to be baptized in "prospect" of their sins being forgiven in A. D. 70. Salvation was, and is, an urgent matter (cf. 2 Cor. 6:2). The urgency is seen in the conversion of the Philippian jailer when he responded in "the same hour of the night" (Acts 16:33).

(3) NO OTHER COMINGS OF CHRIST: The A. D. 70 theory fails and refuses to recognize other comings of Christ besides His birth and His second coming. In fact they recognize ONLY one literal, bodily coming of Christ; i.e., His birth. His second (final) coming is argued to be "real," "true," and "actual," but ONLY in the sense that the Roman army was the "visible manifestation of a hidden divinity."²⁰

By denying other comings of Christ, besides His birth and second (final) coming, they set themselves in direct conflict with the Bible. For instance, the Bible teaches various comings of Christ: (1) His coming

in judgment on Jerusalem (Matt. 24:4-35; 21:43; 23:38). (2) His coming from the tomb (Matt. 28:6). Compare John 11:43 where the resurrection of Lazarus is called a "coming." (3) His coming to John on the Isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:12-18). (4) His coming in conversion (John 14:23).

(4) **CONDITIONAL COMINGS:** The A. D. 70 theory has failed to recognize that in addition to the second coming of Christ, there are "comings of Christ" which are conditional in nature. The second coming of Christ is unconditional: i. e., it is prophesied to occur (John 14:1-3; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 3:10); however, the **TIME** of its occurrence is known only to God. Jesus said, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Matk 13:32; cf. Matt. 24:36. In the second coming passages **NO CONDITION IS GIVEN.**

Neither are there **CONDITIONS** given to the destruction of Jerusalem, which the A. D. 70 brethren, make synonymous with the second coming of Christ. It is prophesied to occur and **NO CONDITION** is given which could have prevented its occurrence. In the Parable of the Marriage Feast (Matt. 22:1-14), the Jews were invited first to prepare to accept the gospel by the prophets and others (Matt. 22:3-4), but the Jews "made

light of it" and persecuted the saints (Matt. 22:5-6). Jesus said He would destroy Jerusalem ("their city," Matt. 22:7) because of their repeated rejection of God's invitation and their inhumane treatment of His servants. In Matthew 22:43, Jesus says, "Therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." As Jesus continued to show their doom, He said, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:37-39). Matthew 24:4-35, as well as other texts, predict the destruction of Jerusalem but WITHOUT CONDITIONS.

By lumping ALL "coming" passages, following the birth of Christ, into the second (final) coming, the A.D. 70 brethren fail to recognize that the Bible also teaches UNCONDITIONAL COMINGS. This is a serious error that will not stand when examined in light of the Bible.

It is the contention of the A. D. 70 brethren that the "conditional comings" in the letters to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 2,3) is the destruction of Jerusalem and the second (final) coming of Christ. But, a careful examination of Revelation 2 and 3 shows these "comings" are neither (1) the destruction of Jerusalem nor (2) the second (final) coming of Christ.

The "coming of Christ" Revelation 2 and 3 promised is conditional: (1) To Ephesus, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, . . . or else I will come unto thee quickly, . . . except thou repent" (Rev. 2:5). (2) To Pergamos, "Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly" (Rev. 2:16). (3) To Thyatira, "Behold I will cast her into a bed, . . . unto a great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds" (Rev. 2:22). (4) To Sardis, "Repent, if thou therefore not watch I will come upon thee" (Rev. 3:3). In ALL of these passages the promised coming of Christ is **CONDITIONAL** upon the repentance of the Christians involved. We ask, "If these brethren repent would He still come with His promised judgment?" These are clearly **CONDITIONAL COMINGS** of Christ.

The coming of Christ in conversion is **CONDITIONAL**. Jesus stated, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). This coming is neither (1) the destruction of Jerusalem nor (2) the second coming of Christ. It is a conversion coming and is conditioned on man's (1) love of Jesus and (2) obedience.

It is erroneous reasoning to make ALL coming passages. after the birth of Christ.

to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem and to identify His judgment in Jerusalem as the second coming.

(5) THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD: While the A. D. 70 brethren believe in the resurrection of the dead, and call it the "greatest event"²¹ occurring at the second (final) coming in A. D. 70, it is denied that it refers to the bodily resurrection of men. King stated, "I deny John 5:28 is a literal grave out here in the cemetery somewhere."²²

What the A. D. 70 brethren mean by the "resurrection of the dead" is the church raised out of the "casket" of Judaism in A. D. 70. The church was in the "grave" or "casket" of Judaism (Babylon)²³ until the Roman army destroyed Jerusalem. The subsequent destruction of Jerusalem produced a risen, glorified, living church! While the church/kingdom existed from Pentecost (Acts 2) to A. D. 70, it did so without power and glory.

If the church was born on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and was raised from the "casket" or "grave" of Judaism in A. D. 70, **WHEN DID THE CHURCH DIE?** The word "resurrection" (anastasis) implies the idea of coming to life after death. But, to have died implies life. Life implies a birth (Acts 2). The resurrection implies a "death"

of the church BEFORE it was raised from the "casket" or "grave" of Judaism in A. D. 70. The nation of Israel is a singular nation and is considered the "dead" out of which the dead church was raised. Acts 24:15 says, "there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust." The word "dead" (nekron) is genitive PLURAL not singular. If the church was raised out of the "dead" (plural), out of what in addition to Judaism was it raised?

John 5:28-29, teaches a bodily resurrection of man regardless what the A. D. 70 brethren affirm. In fact the passage contains six plural phrases: (1) "all those" (pantes); (2) "graves" (mnemeiois); (3) "hear" (akou-sontai); (4) "shall come forth" (ekporeu-sontai); (5) "they that have done good" (hoi ta agatha poiesantes); and (6) "they that have done evil" (hoi de ta phaula praxantes). The word "graves" could not mean, as they teach, Judaism.

These texts (Acts 24:15; John 5:28-29) contain plural terms descriptive of "those" who are resurrected and "out of which" they are resurrected. The plural terms "dead" and "raised" stand in direct contradiction to the A. D. 70 theory that the "raised" involve both "just and unjust" and "good and evil." If the A. D. 70 theory is correct,

then there were "two churches" raised: one, just and good and one: unjust and evil. If the "graves" (plural) is Judaism, then there were "two Judaisms."

The Bible teaches a bodily resurrection of man out of the "graves" of both "good and evil" or "just and unjust" (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15). The dead are "asleep in the dust of the earth" (Dan. 12:2) while the spirit of man returns to its Maker (Eccl. 12:7). The body, which is the ONLY part of man to die, in the sense of James 2:26, is waiting to be raised and changed in a twinkling of the eye (1 Cor. 15:42-52).

(6) THE JUDGMENT AND HOPE: The A. D. 70 theory contends that "the final judgment," "the last day" and "the end of the world" have occurred in A. D. 70 and there is no other. King writes, "This judgment in the last day cannot extend beyond the end-time of Judaism."²⁴ Of course, 2 Peter 3, and other end of the world passages, are explained away as being fulfilled in A. D. 70 with statements as, "One would be hard pressed to find in scripture any connection between Christ's departure from the planet earth and its future destruction."²⁵

While most serious Bible students consider the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70 as the judgment of God and that God brought His judgment on pagan nations in

both Testaments, a great twisting of scripture is required to conclude that "the judgment day" "the last day," and "the end of the world" ALL occurred in A. D. 70. IF all the unrighteous entered "everlasting punishment" and all the righteous entered "life eternal" (Matt. 25:46), WHO would be judged and WHY? King denies a future judgment for mankind beyond A. D. 70, but IF he believes, as well as his followers, that he will miss hell and is going to the eternal abode AFTER his physical death, THEN he believes in judgment of some type.

Along the same line of thought, the A. D. 70 theory teaches that there is "NO HOPE" for man. Brother King writes of the "hope" in 2 Corinthians 3:12 as realized in A. D. 70.²⁶ Even clearer is the statement, "Nothing could be more exciting and encouraging than having the 'real thing' rather than just the pledge and hope."²⁷ Can you believe, here on the earth, that NO HOPE "could be more exciting and encouraging than HOPE?" This is both secular and materialistic! Affirming as they do that "hope" is fulfilled contradicts, "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" (Rom. 8:24). King denies a future hope beyond A. D. 70, but IF he believes, as well as his followers, that there is something beyond after physical death,

and they do, THEN he believes in hope of some type!

(7) **THE LAW OF MOSES:** It is argued that the Law of Moses continued in effect as God's AMENABLE law for the Jew from Pentecost (Acts 2) until A. D. 70. The new covenant co-existed with the Law of Moses an approximate 40 year time period. When Jerusalem was destroyed in A. D. 70, the Law was fulfilled and removed. It is argued that the early Christians from Acts 2 until A. D. 70 KEPT the Law of Moses while keeping the Law of Christ.

Note carefully the following statements:
(1) "I would agree that the new covenant 'existed' (but was not established yet, see Hebrews 10:9) before the fall of Jerusalem, but that such implies that the Law of Moses was abolished prior to A. D. 70 does not follow logically."²⁸ (2) "The Law was nailed to the cross, but not destroyed. It was taken 'out of the way,' but not taken away in the sense of existing any longer. The law was not DESTROYED, but rather FULFILLED, and it was not COMPLETELY FULFILLED until heaven and earth passed away (Matt. 5:17,18), or until Christ come again (Acts 3:21)."²⁹ (3) "The physical rudiments of Judaism mentioned in that context (Heb. 9, WTV) were still 'IMPOSED' (caps mine, WTV) upon them, just like Jesus had said

. . .”³⁰(4) “That is why Paul and all the apostles continued to **KEEP** the Law **AFTER** the cross; . . .”³¹

Jesus said He came not to “destroy the law, . . . but to fulfill” (Matt. 5:17-18). His mission of fulfilling the law is stated on the cross as, “It is finished” (John 19:30).

Colossians 2:14 shows that: (1) the Law of Moses was nailed to the cross and “taken out of the way” at that time as God’s acceptable law for the Jews. (2) The **RESULT** was that **BOTH**, Jew and Gentile, were **RECONCILED** “unto God in one body by the cross” (Eph. 2:16). (3) Both Jew and Gentile, “have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph. 2:18). (4) The **CHURCH** was the “holy temple” (Eph. 2:21) possessing the “habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22), not the temple or Jerusalem, as under the Law of Moses.

Two laws cannot exist at the same time to which man is amenable. As long as the Law of Moses existed as God’s acceptable law for the Jew, he was amenable to it (Deut. 4:1-2). He dare not forsake it and embrace another law. The reverse is true of the Christian law, we dare not forsake it and embrace another law. The law was given to fleshly Israel (Deut. 5:1ff.) and spiritual Israel has

never been amenable to it, the law was nailed to the cross removing its demands of amenability upon the Jew (cf. Col. 2:14; Eph. 2:11-22).

To reason that it takes the destruction of Jerusalem to FULFILL the Law of Moses and to remove it, demotes the efficacy of the cross and exalts and magnifies the destruction of Jerusalem. This is the teaching of the A. D. 70 brethren! As a consequence, they teach that it was not at the cross, but at A. D. 70 that the following occurred: (1) the end of the law, (2) remission of sins (see above), (3) the change of the priesthood and law,³² (4) Christ became King,³³ (5) the kingdom established with glory and power,³⁴ (6) the resurrection of the Lord, the judgment of all mankind, and hope realized (see above), (7) death and hades end,³⁵ and (8) ALL prophecy fulfilled.³⁶

Brother Siverd sums his concept of the weakness of the cross and his exaltation of the destruction of Jerusalem as, "the consummation of the Old Testament Aeon of Sin and Death (which did not occur instantaneously with the death of Jesus on the cross (cf. Heb. 8:13), brought out, revealed and manifested the reality of the New Aeon, the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1,2)."³⁷ The comment is contradictory to the Bible and blasphemes Christ's

work on the cross!

TWO UNANSWERABLE QUESTIONS

In the early writings of the non-inspired Christians in the last quarter of the first century and the early second century we have no hint that the destruction of Jerusalem was the second (final) coming of Christ. Since they claim their theory is New Testament teaching, but became "lost in the dark ages,"³⁸ we challenge a logical response to the following two questions: (1) **WHEN**, historically, did the early church so apostatize in understanding that it came to believe that the second coming of Christ, and its attendant doctrines, **DID NOT OCCUR IN A. D. 70 IN THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM**, but was yet in the future? (2) **WHERE** can we find the record of the controversy concerning the second coming of Christ, and its attendant doctrines, in the writings of the early non-inspired Christians?

These two questions **CANNOT BE IGNORED** and **MUST BE HONESTLY DISCUSSED**. Remember, brother King claims it was "lost in the dark ages."³⁹ To make such a statement implies evidence! Give us the evidence to examine.

CONCLUSION

The A. D. 70 theory is extremely contradictory both with the Bible and within their writings. It blasphemes the Bible. Brother Geiser claims that Christ's "resurrection was also **SUBSUMPTIOUS** (caps mine, WTV) of the resurrection of the dead (the church raised out of the casket of Judaism, WTV)"⁴⁰ **SUBSUMPTIOUS** means "a minor concept or minor premise" in relation to something else. Can you believe that the resurrection of Christ, which is inseparable from the cross, is a "minor concept or point" in relation to raising the church out of the "casket" of Judaism or the destruction of Jerusalem? Nothing could be more revolting, irreverent, and diminishing of the cross of Christ.

ENDNOTES

1 See his *The Spirit of Prophecy* (Warren, Ohio: Warren Printing Co., 1971); *THE CROSS AND THE PAROUSIA OF CHRIST* (Warren, Ohio: Writing and Research Ministry, 1987); and his monthly 12 page paper, *THE LIVING PRESENCE*, which began publication August 1990.

2 "Paul or Campbell -- Which?" BIBLE HERALD. XIX. May 1, 1971, p. 11.

3 W. Terry Varner, STUDIES IN BIBLICAL ESCHATOLOGY: BACKGROUND STUDY TO THE A. D. 70 THEORY, (Marietta, OH: Therefore Stand Publications, 1981), I. 13-31.

4 THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY, p. 158.

5 Ibid.. p. 220.

6 Ibid.. p. 594; Terry Siverd, "The Desertion of Demas." Parkman Road church bulletin, 4705 Parkman Road. Warren, OH 44481, October 28, 1990.

7 Ibid.. p. 162.

8 Ibid.. p. 215.

9 Ibid.. pp.iii, 47-48, 55, 101, 234; THE LIVING PRESENCE. I. October 1990, pp. 10-11.

10 Hermeneutics (Hurst, TX: Brown Trail School of Preaching, 1965), p.. 11.

11 THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY, pp. 6, 240.

12 THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY, pp. 70, 105. See also, Ed Stevens, WHAT HAPPENED IN 70 A. D.? (Ashtabula, OH: North-east Ohio Bible Institute, 1981), p. 3.

13 Charles E. Geiser, "The Second Coming of Christ -- Crisis or Delay." STUDIES IN

- BIBLE PROPHECY, III, July 1980, pp. 1-3.**
- 14 WEBSTER'S NEW WORLD DICTIONARY, pp. 457, 702.**
- 15 Gary Workman, "The Max King Doctrine," THE CHURCH-CHALLENGED BY CURRENT ISSUES, " Bill Jackson (ed.) (Austin, TX: Southwest Publications, 1984, p. 181.**
- 16 Varner-Geiser Debate (unpublished), Proposition I, 3A20.**
- 17 Ibid., Proposition I, 3A21.**
- 18 THE LIVING PRESENCE, I, January 1991, p. 2. See, THE SPIRIT OF pp. 60-74. THE CROSS AND THE PAROUSIA OF CHRIST, pp. 276, 310, 516, 704.**
- 19 VARNER-GEISER DEBATE, Proposition II, 3N42.**
- 20 THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY, po. 107-108.**
- 21 Ibid., p. 191.**
- 22 Nichols-King Debate (Warren, OH: Parkman Road Church of Christ, n.d.) , p. 97.**
- 23 THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY, p. 223.**
- 24 Ibid., p. 176; cf. pp. 169, 170, 175, 220, 257.**
- 25 THE LIVING PRESENCE, I, November 1990, p. 3.**
- 26 Ibid., I, September 1990, p. 2.**

- 27 **KINGDOM COUNSEL, I, December 1989, p. 11.**
- 28 **VARNER-GEISER DEBATE, Proposition II, 2N4.** Charles E. Geiser denied the proposition: "The Bible teaches that the Law of Moses was abolished before the destruction of Jerusalem as God's acceptable law for the Jews."
- 29 **THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY, p. 368.**
- 30 **KINGDOM COUNSEL, II, January 1990, p. 7.**
- 31 **SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES, I, October 1984, p. 2.**
- 32 **VARNER-GEISER DEBATE, Proposition II, 1N12.**
- 33 **Ibid., Proposition II, 2N3.**
- 34 **THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY, pp. 64-65.**
- 35 **Ibid., p. 356.**
- 36 **Ibid., p. 229.**
- 37 **THE LIVING PRESENCE, I, August 1990, pp. 9-10.**
- 38 See, Varner, W. Terry, **STUDIES IN BIBLICAL ESCHATOLOGY, I.** pp. 78-97 for a full discussion of the role and evidence of the early non-inspired writings.
- 39 **THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY, p. 353.**
- 40 **VARNER-GEISER DEBATE, Proposition I, 1A9.**

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