

Session 2: Preparing the Way for Christ's Return

I. Forerunners Before the Lord Returns

1. The purpose of this session and the next is to establish the scriptural basis for end-time forerunners.

a) To refresh our memories from the first session, the two foundational scriptures on which we base the forerunner call are,

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6, NKJV).

And,

And he [John the Baptist] will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord (Lk. 1:16-17).

b) Drawing first from the book of Malachi, this session focuses on establishing the fact that in our day God is raising up forerunners *for the end times*, specifically to prepare the way for Christ's second coming. In the next session, we will dissect Luke 1:16-17 to define in detail the forerunner call. Together, these two sessions will give us a solid scriptural foundation to understand the forerunner call, what it is, and how it applies to our generation and the end times.

2. To be effective as an end-time forerunner, it is extremely important that forerunners have a firm conviction that they are called in this way.

a) As we begin, I want to make the point that it is essential that those called as forerunners are convinced that the call is real and that they are called to it. In many ways, even though a crucial end-time ministry, you will feel like you are traveling upstream while the rest of the church is heading downstream. Whereas many people will eagerly pursue the call as a forerunner, others will doubt the call, criticize it, and resist it. To be effective in this much needed ministry, you must be convinced that the call is real and that you are called to it.

b) I will share the story of how my wife and I received the call as forerunners to illustrate the importance of being certain of the call. This will help explain why it is important to secure in our heart the legitimacy of the call for forerunners in our day. It is my hope that this will motivate you to dig deeply into the scriptures in this session and the next to ensure that you can support biblically the forerunner call that is now being released upon the church.

c) My wife and I began the church we pastored for about 25 years in 1991. Prior to starting the church, we had been on the ministerial staff of a traditional Baptist church. At the time, we had a real desire for the charismatic gifts and the power of God for signs and wonders. In the early years, we tried everything we knew to move in the power of the Holy Spirit. We attempted to be a part of the healing movement, the prophetic movement, the laughing movement, and any movement that had

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any external display of power. Although we did have some success, in actuality, we were floundering during those years trying to find our identity. It seemed we did not fit anywhere in the body of Christ. We knew we did not want to be a traditional Baptist church but we didn't connect with traditional charismatic churches either. Finally, I got to the point that I was crying out to the Lord, "Why did You call us into ministry"? We were content being in business.

- d) It was at this point—1996 to be exact—that the Lord began to introduce us to the idea of end-time forerunners. A man and his wife from Australia who later became very close friends began to come to our church. He began to speak about forerunners, the spirit and power of Elijah, and many other topics that we knew nothing about but are all a part of the forerunner call. Even though his message resonated with us in a powerful way, we still were not certain about the call and if we were called to be a part of it. The next year, the Lord compelled us to go to Kansas City to Mike Bickle's *Passion for Jesus* conference. At that conference, Mike preached a message on the forerunner call. He gave an altar call for those who desired to be forerunners. We couldn't get to the altar quick enough. We knew that this was what we were called to be—forerunners in the spirit and power of Elijah. We had found our role in the body of Christ and were thrilled about this newly discovered assignment.
- e) As excited as we were, we soon found out that not everyone in our church shared our enthusiasm. When I began to speak to our church about our call as forerunners in the spirit and power of Elijah, several in our church vocally and argumentatively questioned if there was even such a thing as a forerunner. Others were more silent on the issue but questioned it too. This issue became a serious point of contention in our church for quite a long time. In fact, some of our members left the church because of it, and others stayed only because they trusted my wife and my relationship with the Lord. After the Mike Bickle conference, there was no doubt in our hearts that there was such a call and that my wife and I were called in that way. Our hearts burned with passion to be forerunners, and, as a side note, it hasn't ever waned. In fact, I am more passionate now for the call than ever before. However, in those early days of the call, I didn't have sufficient understanding of the scriptures to really support the call to those questioning if it is a real end-time call now being released upon the church.
- f) My lack of ability to support the call scripturally created a lot of questions and confusion in our midst. As you embark on this call, many of you will encounter similar situations as I did. If you do, it will be crucial for you to be able to articulate the scriptural support for the forerunner call and for all that is involved in the call. Thus, the reason for this session and the next. I encourage you to really dig deep into these next two sessions and get the scriptural basis for the forerunner call deep into your heart. I promise you won't regret it.
- g) Let's begin as we develop the support that God is raising up end-time forerunners.

3. God has always employed forerunners.

- a) Quite possibly the first forerunner, Noah spent 120 years as a preacher of righteousness while building an ark to save the world from the great flood. At the time, it had never rained. Even though only his family of eight heeded his message, he was faithful to press into God's purposes for His generation, announce to the world that judgment was coming, and call people to repentance and salvation.

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- b) Joseph was another forerunner. He was taken to Egypt against his will; but, while there he increased in authority and favor. His dream about the seven years of abundance to be followed by seven years of famine positioned him to save his family during the severity of the drought that ultimately came. He was used of God to prepare the way for the salvation of his family.
- c) Likewise, Moses was a forerunner who was used by God to deliver God's people from Egyptian slavery. God spoke to him at the burning bush of His plans to deliver His people. Moses, even though in fear, obeyed and was used to deliver the Hebrew nation from bondage.
- d) Jesus was also a forerunner. He came to earth to show us the way to live and to pay the price for us to have eternal life. After His resurrection, He entered the heavenly tabernacle as a forerunner on our behalf going before us and making a way for us to follow (Heb. 6:20).
- e) Of course, John the Baptist was a forerunner who prepared the way for Jesus earthly ministry. He went ahead of Jesus to wake up his generation, call them to repentance, and announce the soon coming of Israel's Messiah. The primary purpose of his ministry was to prepare the way for Jesus' coming by making people ready to receive Jesus and not miss their day of visitation.
- f) Throughout church history, there have been forerunners who have gone ahead of the church of their day to lead the overall church into new truths and expressions of the faith. Martin Luther, John and Charles Wesley, and the birth of the Pentecostal movement at Azusa Street at the turn of the twentieth century are all examples.
- g) Even though there have been many forerunners throughout history, we want to establish in this session that in our day God is raising up *end-time* forerunners to make a people ready for Christ's second coming.

II. The Scriptural Basis for End-time Forerunners

1. As we discuss end-time forerunners, it is important that we explain what we mean by the end times.
 - a) When we use the phrase "end times" we are not referring only to the last 3 ½ or even the last 7 years of the church age, but also to the last generation and possibly even multiple generations which will climax with the second coming of Christ. In Lifeschool, we sometimes refer to several prophetic timeframes in the end times. The scriptures refer to a period called "the beginning of birth pangs". They also refer to the coming of a seventh and eighth antichrist kingdom as well as to the Day of the Lord which we will look at in more detail momentarily. In aggregate, these seasons encompass a much greater time period than the seven years most frequently spoken of in the context of the end times.
 - b) We will leave the detailed explanation of these end-time themes to other classes, but we believe that we are living now in the time of the beginning of birth pangs (Mt. 24:8). Also, we believe also that global events are in operation now such that the world is on the verge of the coming forth of the seventh kingdom referred to in the book of Revelation (Rev. 17:9-11). We believe that the seventh kingdom will be a coming global movement many call "a new world order". The new world order will

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combine a global economy, global government, and a unified global religion intertwined into a new order directed, controlled, and dictated by a small group of global elite.

- c) Therefore, as we refer to the end times, be aware that we are speaking of days that have already begun and will lead to the events of the periods of worldwide peace and safety, the Day of the Lord, the second coming of Jesus Christ, the millennial reign of Jesus as the King of the earth, and ultimately the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven. In other words, as we define the end times, we are living in them now!
- d) Next, let's look at the scriptural support for end-time forerunners.

2. Malachi prophesied that God would send Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord.

- a) Malachi 4:5 reads, "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. Notice that God will send Elijah or the spirit of Elijah *before* the coming of the day of the Lord.
- b) In the Old Testament, the expression "day of the Lord" occurs eighteen times in the prophetic literature, most often in the books of Joel and Zephaniah and the phrase "on that day" referring to the day of the Lord occurs 208 times.¹ The day of the Lord denotes the ideas of judgment upon the earth, the ending of evil, and the restoration of God's purposes. The scriptures refer to the day of the Lord as a dark and foreboding time in which God's will and purpose for mankind and the world will be fulfilled.
- c) From the New Testament perspective, the day of the Lord refers to the end of the church age and the beginning of the kingdom age. Some scholars think of it as a brief period and others as a prolonged timeframe. In either case, it refers to the general period surrounding the second coming of Christ.
- d) Therefore, when Malachi writes that God will send Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord, he is referring to Elijah coming in a timeframe preceding yet connected to the second coming of Christ.

3. Malachi Chapter 3 reinforces the idea of Elijah coming in connection to the second coming of Christ.

- a) Malachi writes,

"He [Christ] is coming," says the LORD of hosts. "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years" (Mal. 3:1-4).

- b) Malachi was describing the state of God's people prior to the second coming of Christ. He tells us in very graphic terms that God's people are not ready for His coming. In their unprepared condition,

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they will not be able to endure the refining and cleansing that is necessary and will take place at His coming. In the context of His people not being ready for His coming, He says, "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me" (Mal. 3:1, NKJV). We know from Chapter 4 that the messenger Malachi is referring to is Elijah.

- c) Important to note, we know that by the time Malachi wrote his prophecy in the 5th century BC, more than 400 years had passed since Elijah the Tishbite had lived and ministered in the northern kingdom of Israel.

4. John the Baptist partially fulfilled the prophecy of Malachi.

- a) As we noted earlier, John the Baptist ministered as a forerunner in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17). Jesus confirmed that John operated in the anointing of Elijah. Matthew records the following, "And He [Jesus] answered and said, 'Elijah is coming and will restore all things; *but I say to you that Elijah already came*, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.' Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist" (Matt. 17:11-13).
- b) John the Baptist was a forerunner who ministered in the spirit and power of Elijah; even so, as we will observe from the next section, he only fulfilled Malachi's prophecy in part.

5. Isaiah prophesies the coming of John the Baptist and also reinforces the idea of end-time forerunners.

- a) We learn from the prophet Isaiah that God will raise up end-time messengers to prepare the way for the Lord. He writes,

The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "*Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken*" (Isa. 40:3-5, NKJV).

- b) As several New Testament verses clarify, the preceding passage refers to John the Baptist and his ministry in Israel as he made a way for Jesus' ministry. However, there is also an end-time emphasis added to this passage when Isaiah writes,

Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of good news, lift up your voice mightily, O Jerusalem, bearer of good news; lift it up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" *Behold, the Lord GOD will come with might, with His arm ruling for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him and His recompense before Him.* (Isa. 40:9-10).

- c) From this, we note that John the Baptist only partially fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy. In addition, as the above passage supports, there will also be end-time messengers---forerunners—who prepare the way for Christ's second coming.

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6. God will send Elijah once again before the second coming of Christ.

- a) We know this to be true because of two reasons. First, as we have previously discussed, Malachi stated in his prophecy that Elijah would come before the great and terrible day of the Lord which we know from the previous discussion that the day of the Lord refers to the events surrounding the second coming of Jesus.
- b) Second, in another verse we used earlier, Jesus said, "Elijah is coming and will restore all things" (Mt. 17:11). In this passage Jesus was making the point that not only had Elijah already come, but that he would come again. When Jesus spoke these words, John the Baptist had already been killed by Herod. Notice John was imprisoned near the beginning of Jesus' ministry, "Now when Jesus heard [*immediately after coming out of His wilderness temptation*] that John had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee" (Matt 4:12). Notice also that the gospel of Matthew records John's death in Chapter 14, "He sent and had John beheaded in the prison. And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. His disciples came and took away the body and buried it; and they went and reported to Jesus" (Mt. 14:10-12). The events of both of these passages took place *before* Jesus stated in Matthew 17 that John will come again.
- c) Therefore, we can conclude that in some manner, Elijah will come again before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord to operate as a forerunner to prepare the way for the second coming of Christ and to make a people ready for His coming.

7. Elijah will minister in Jerusalem during the days of the great tribulation.

- a) Speaking of the two witnesses, the Book of Revelation states, "These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire" (Rev. 11:6).
- b) Many commentators believe that based on the descriptions of their ministries, the two witnesses represent Elijah and Moses. You will remember that Moses turned the Nile River to blood and Elijah shut the heavens over Israel for three and one-half years, the same period of time that the two witnesses will minister in Jerusalem.
- c) So, it appears that one of these two end-time witnesses ministering in Jerusalem in the end times is Elijah. The question naturally arises, "Is the ministry of the two witnesses the final fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy? Is this witness the only end-time forerunner who will minister in the spirit and power of Elijah?"
- d) Our answer to that question is "no", and the following are our reasons.

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8. There will also be a worldwide company of believers who minister as end-time forerunners in the spirit and power of Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord.
- a) The question naturally arises of how do we know that Malachi's prophecy refers to a worldwide company of believers and not just to one person located in Jerusalem during the period of tribulation?
 - b) John the Baptist was needed to turn Israel back to God, to turn Israel back to righteousness, and to prepare the way of the Lord in Israel. John's ministry was focused upon Israel because at His first coming Jesus was coming to Israel. However, the second coming will be global and will affect every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. In addition, believers in many places in the earth are much like Israel in Elijah's and John's day—in apostasy, far from God, given to idols, immorality, and wickedness. There is a very real need for the anointing of Elijah to be released not just upon one man in Israel but upon a global company of prophetic messengers. There are four reasons why the Elijah of Malachi's prophecy and referred to by Jesus in Matthew 17:11 refers to a global group of believers in the end times.
 - c) First, the spirit and power of Elijah refers to an anointing upon people, not to the reincarnation or the return from heaven of a person who literally lived in times past. Elijah was not reincarnated as John the Baptist; instead, John the Baptist was empowered with the spirit and power that was on Elijah. The same will be true in the end times as God raises up a worldwide Elijah company to operate in the anointing that empowered Elijah—with the purpose of making ready a people prepared for the Lord and of preparing the way for Christ's return. This company will be used of God to restore all things, to turn the hearts of the people back to God, to make them ready for the end times and for eternity and to make the way smooth for Christ to come. Jesus called John the Baptist "Elijah" because he was anointed with the spirit and power of Elijah. He had a similar function and moved in the same anointing that was on Elijah's life.
 - d) Second, Jesus said that the Elijah spoken of by Malachi would restore all things. The restoration of all things will take place on a global scale and take a considerable amount of time and effort. It is logical to assume that this massive effort will require a large group of people functioning as forerunners for an extended period of time.
 - e) Third, the Elijah described in Malachi restores generations back to the Lord. Elijah will "turn the hearts of fathers to the sons and sons to the fathers". Even though this certainly applies to natural fathers and sons, the primary application of this passage is to spiritual fathers and spiritual sons. Forerunners will devote their time and energy to raising up spiritual sons and daughters. This anointing and call is a transgenerational call on a global scale. It is certainly too great a task for one person ministering in only one geographic area.
 - f) Fourth, a part of the ministry of end-time forerunners will be to turn the disobedient back to the attitude of the righteous (Luke 1:17), that is, back to obedience to God, His laws and His word. This is a massive effort that will take place on a global basis, since the church in many instances has drifted far, far from God and devotion to His ways and words. Again, it is far too extensive a task for one person in a three-and-a-half-year period to accomplish.

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- g) John the Baptist ministered for a short period of time in a tiny piece of land in the middle east. The ministry of end-time forerunners will require a large group—possibly even the entire end-time church functioning as forerunners operating in the spirit and power of Elijah for an extended period of time, possibly generations, to prepare the earth and the people for the second coming of Christ.

III. Illustrated in the Lives of Elijah and Elisha

1. This final section presents Elijah, Elisha, and Jehu foreshadowing the ushering in of the second coming of Christ.

- a) We can learn a lot from Old Testament types, shadows, and allegories. Often they present a beautiful picture to expand upon and illustrate what the New Testament lays out as factual information. Examples are Esther, Ruth, and Song of Songs illustrating the bridal relationship between Christ and His church; Noah as a picture of the days surrounding the second coming of Christ; and the Exodus and Joshua taking the land foreshadowing the believer's journey toward taking their full inheritance.
- b) The lives of Elijah, Elisha, and Jehu are another example that foreshadows in an amazing way the second coming of Christ. We present it here since it reinforces the purpose of this session: that the ministry of forerunners in the spirit and power of Elijah is *an end-time ministry*. Just as Elisha and his spiritual sons anointed King Jehu as king of Israel, the church anointed with the spirit and power of Elijah will usher in the second coming of Christ.
- c) The primary text for this comparison is 2 Kings 9-10. It begins with one of the spiritual sons of Elisha anointing Jehu as King over Israel,

Now Elisha the prophet called one of the sons of the prophets and said to him, "Gird up your loins, and take this flask of oil in your hand and go to Ramoth-gilead. "When you arrive there, search out Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi, and go in and bid him arise from among his brothers, and bring him to an inner room. "Then take the flask of oil and pour it on his head and say, 'Thus says the Lord, "I have anointed you king over Israel"'(2 Kings 9:1-3).

- d) The name *Jehu* in the Hebrew means *Yah is He* or *Jehovah (Yahweh) is He*.² Thus, we see that a spiritual son of Elisha anoints Jehu as king over Israel, Jehu is a picture of Christ at His second coming. The parallels between 2 Kings 9-10 and the second coming of Christ are far beyond coincidence.

2. The following comparisons illustrate some of the parallels between the anointing of Jehu as king and the second coming of Christ.

- a) Jehu was anointed as king over Israel (2 Kings 9:3,6) and Christ will be declared King over the entire earth (Rev. 11:15, 19:16).
- b) Jehu was a captain in Israel's army (2 Kings 9:5) and Christ will return as King of kings and Lord of lords and the Captain of the hosts (Rev. 19:11-14).

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- c) Jehu was given the assignment to destroy Jezebel and the entire house of Ahab, "You shall strike the house of Ahab your master, that I may avenge the blood of My servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord, at the hand of Jezebel. For the whole house of Ahab shall perish, and I will cut off from Ahab every male person both bond and free in Israel. I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah. The dogs shall eat Jezebel in the territory of Jezreel, and none shall bury her. Then he opened the door and fled" (2 Kings 9:7-10). Christ will destroy the entire house of the anti-christ at His coming (Rev. 19:19-20) and will cause the destruction of Babylon, the Great, the mother of harlots to avenge the blood of the prophets and the saints (Rev. 17:6, 18:20, 24).
- d) After anointing Jehu as king, they blew the trumpet saying "Jehu is king" (2 Kings 13). When Christ returns, He will come with the sound of the trumpet (1 Thess. 4:16).
- e) Jehu went immediately to kill Ahab's son, Joram who was king of Israel at the time. He went with great urgency immediately upon being anointed as king and was accompanied by an army of the Lord (2 Kings 9:17-20). Christ will return with great zeal accompanied by His army to defeat the enemies of the people of God (Zech. 14:3; Rev. 19:11-21).
- f) Jehu drew his bow with full strength to kill Joram and had his body thrown onto the property of Naboth where Ahab and Jezebel had stolen Naboth's vineyard and had Naboth killed (2 Kings 9:24-26). Christ will have the beast and the false prophet thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:19-21).
- g) Elijah prophesied that when Jehu killed the descendants of Ahab that those killed would be eaten by the birds of heaven (1 Kings 21:24). When Christ returns, the birds of heaven will eat the flesh of kings and commanders (Rev. 19:17-18).
- h) Jehu killed Ahaziah, the king of Judah who had aligned himself with the house of Ahab (2 Kings 9:27). In comparison, Christ will kill at His coming with the sword of His mouth the kings aligned with the beast (Rev. 19:21).
- i) Joram, the son of Ahab, was killed by Jehu in Megiddo (2 Kings 9:27). The last battle—the battle of Armageddon—will be fought in the Jezreel valley where Megiddo is located (Rev. 16:16, 19:19). Armageddon or actually Har-Magedon literally means the Mount of Megiddo.³
- j) Jehu had Jezebel thrown down from an upstairs window where she died and was eaten by the dogs thus fulfilling the word spoken by Elijah that her body would become as dung spread over the land she had stolen from Naboth (2 Kings 9:33-37). In a similar fashion, Babylon, the Great, the Mother of Harlots, will be thrown down with violence and will not be found any longer (Rev. 18:21).
- k) After Jehu killed Ahab's son and Jezebel, he went in and ate and drank (2 Kings 9:34). After this great battle, Christ will celebrate with his bride at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9).
- l) Jehu killed the entire house of Ahab in Jezreel and in Samaria (2 Kings 10:1-11, 17). Following His return, Christ will gather the nations for a time of judgment. All who followed the beast will be killed (Rev. 20:4, Matt. 25:31-46).
- m) Jehu completely eradicated Baal worship from the land by gathering all the priests, prophets, and worshipers of Baal in one place. Once gathered, he killed them all and burned all of their

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implements of worship and burned their temple (2 Kings 10:18-28). Once Christ returns, He will remove all false worship from the land. He will be the only one worshiped in the Millennial Kingdom and beyond (Zech. 14:9, 16).

- n) The purpose of sharing comparison between King Jehu and the second coming of Christ has really one purpose for us in this session. It illustrates and reinforces that the forerunner call and the anointing of the spirit and power of Elijah is an *end-time call*.
- o) Now that we know the forerunner call is an end-time call intended to prepare the way for the second coming of Christ, let's in the next session define the forerunner call.

¹ Day of the Lord, *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. 1996, Baker Books.

² Jehu, *The Online Bible Thayer's Greek Lexicon and Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon*, Copyright © 1993, Woodside Bible Fellowship, Ontario, Canada. Licensed from the Institute for Creation Research

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