

Are You Ready for the King?

Psalm 24

Main point: If we are to be ready for the King, we must realize how big, holy, and mighty He is and worship Him.

The earth is the LORD's, and all it contains,
The world, and those who dwell in it.
² For He has founded it upon the seas
And established it upon the rivers.
³ Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD?
And who may stand in His holy place?
⁴ He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood
And has not sworn deceitfully.
⁵ He shall receive a blessing from the LORD
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.
⁶ This is the generation of those who seek Him,
Who seek Your face—even Jacob. *Selah.*
⁷ Lift up your heads, O gates,
And be lifted up, O ancient doors,
That the King of glory may come in!
⁸ Who is the King of glory?
The LORD strong and mighty,
The LORD mighty in battle.
⁹ Lift up your heads, O gates,
And lift *them* up, O ancient doors,
That the King of glory may come in!
¹⁰ Who is this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts,
He is the King of glory. *Selah.*

PSALM 24

Introduction:

Most commentators agree that this psalm was written for that occasion in 2 Samuel 6 when the ark of the Lord was brought from the house of Obed-edom, to the resting place in the holy of holies in Jerusalem. You recall, from the reading earlier, that on the first occasion, David sought to bring the ark to Jerusalem from the house of Abinadab on a new cart (2 Sam.6:3). This was not God's way of doing it; rather, it was the Philistines' way. God had given specific instruction that the ark was to be carried by the Levites with poles (Num.25:14-15). Then it happened, as the King's procession came to the threshing floor of Nacon, the oxen shook the ark, and Uzzah instinctively reached out to steady the ark from falling over, and God struck him dead. By reaching out to touch the ark, Uzzah acted against the law of his God, and judgment fell on him.

Now David was angered by this, but his anger quickly subsided by fear. In his fear, David decided to leave the ark at the home of Obed-edom for three months, and during the course of that time, the news came to David of how the household of Obed-edom was blessed because the ark of the Lord was there.

Here is a principle that we can lift from the background: *a home with God's presence within it is a home that is truly blessed.*

On the second occasion, David seeks to bring the ark to Jerusalem, but this time he lays aside his kingly garments and puts on a simple linen ephod (loincloth) to show that he is an acceptable temple servant (7 *Sam.2:18b*). 2 Samuel 6:12 describes David and the people bringing the ark to Jerusalem with great gladness.

This is the occasion when David pens Psalm 24. As the ark ascends up the hill to Jerusalem, David dances before the Lord, and this psalm would have been sung. Can you picture the scene? It is an antiphonal psalm, meaning that David would have sung the opening verse,

The earth is the LORD's, and all it contains,
The world, and those who dwell in it.

Then the people would have joined in a chorus with David and they would have sung,

² For He has founded it upon the seas
And established it upon the rivers.

Then David would have sung verse 3,

³ Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD?
And who may stand in His holy place?

And the people again would have joined him in joyful singing,

⁴ He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood...

What a scene of tremendous joy and triumph that day! As David and Israel rejoiced in the ark entering the holy place, we too are called to rejoice, for Psalm 24 is a *foreshadowing of Christ's return to glory with the spoils of His victory upon the cross*.

Psalm 24 is the final episode, if you will, in the Messianic trilogy. When we group Psalms 22, 23, and 24 together, we have a three-fold picture of Christ.

- **In Psalm 22, we see Christ as Savior.** Our eyes are opened to see Him hanging on a tree, and if we are to know Him, we must *believe* that He is the sin-bearing substitute for our sins and *receive* Him as Lord and Savior.
- **In Psalm 23, we see Christ as Shepherd.** Having received Him, we come to know Him as our Good Shepherd, who *provides* what we need and *protects* us and *pursues* us home to His house in glory.
- **In Psalm 24, we see Christ as Sovereign.** Here we will learn that we must yield to His fuller claims as Lord of all, for "*if He is not Lord of all in your life and mine, He is not Lord at all.*" 23—the *Cross*, 24—the *Crook*, and 24—the *Crown*.

The primary burden of Psalm 24 is to tell Israel and us *to be ready for the King*. And if we are to be ready for the King, we must realize *what sort of King He is*; we must realize how BIG He is (vv.1-2), how HOLY He is (vv.3-6), and how MIGHTY He is (vv.7-10). Each of these sections constitutes a scenario about the King of

glory. I invite you to look with me at this ascension psalm, and I want to leave three simple thoughts with you from the text.

Exposition:

As the psalm opens, we walk into...

A. The Lord's World (vv.1-2)

The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains,
The world, and those who dwell in it.
²For He has founded it upon the seas
And established it upon the rivers.

What is the main message the psalmist intends to convey? There are two points David desires to make.

1. **God (Yahweh) has Creator rights**—the *earth* and *what fills it* (its vast resources, Cf.Ps.50:10-12; 104:24), the *world* and the *people* who live in it (Every living soul, Cf.Ezek.18:4; Num.27:16; Is.42:5), are His and His alone. It all belongs to Him, and no one else. To David, this declaration meant the *good*, the *bad*, and the *ugly*. It meant his *family*, his *friends*, his *fortunes*, as well as his *foes*. The most frightening challenges and the most undeserved blessings (Cf. Job 1:21). David desires to guard us from what has been called "punifying God." God is not some puny little superhero who battles against other masters of the universe. Why?

- Number one—He has no weakness that makes Him vulnerable.
- Number two—He has no rival, who can undermine His authority or frustrate His plans.
- Number three—He possesses no limitations and has no head-scratching moments.

Yahweh, and Yahweh alone, holds possession of and sovereignty over the world.

- In **Matthew 28**, Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth..."
- In **Matthew 6:13**, Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen." Jesus Christ is creation's King.
- **John 1:3**—All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.
- **Colossians 1:16-17**—For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

Application: Surely, you don't have to be a prophet to recognize this in our current situation. Can we admit that we often daily live as if things belong to us? We speak of my time, my job, my rights, and my family, when in fact, we own nothing. Everything is on loan from God. We breathe God's air. We drink God's water. We enjoy God's blessings. I'm speaking to some who have had no time for God—you've been chasing things in the world. But Jesus said, "What does it profit a man to gain the whole

world, and forfeit his soul" (Mark 8:36). Right now, God is using a virus to show the whole world what David spoke of long ago—"The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it" (Cf. Job.1:21).

2. **God (Yahweh) cares for and sustains what He created.** The pronoun, "**He**," in verse 2 is emphatic. Not only are we told that God has creator rights, by also the *reason* He has it. "**He has founded it...and established it...**" David uses two verbs to distinguish God's work. The first verb, "**founded**," instructs us about God's *past work*. The second verb, "**established**," can be translated as "*continues to maintain*."

Some of the founding fathers of our nation (Thomas Jefferson, Ben Franklin, and Thomas Payne) were deists. Deists believe that "God created the world, but He is indifferent to it." In other words, creation was like a watch that God put together and wound up to let it operate on its own. No, no, David says. Yahweh has created all things, and He *continues* to care for and sustain what He has created.

- **Psalm 104:5**—He established the earth upon its foundations,
So that it will not totter forever and ever.

Now the phrases, "founded upon **the seas**" and "established it upon **the rivers**," give you the impression that the earth is being held up by these massive bodies of water like the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans. The problem is "the seas and rivers" don't give the impression of *stability*. David is simply using poetic language to teach us that "the seas and the rivers" are not only *supplied* by God to aid His creation, but they are also *ordered* by Him.

- **Proverbs 27:1**—The King's heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the LORD;
He turns it wherever He wishes.

David is recalling the first act of creation when God summoned the dry land to rise from the watery surface (Gen.1:2, 9). My friends, creation is the work of His hands (Ps.100).

There is a certain *stability* infused the world He made. But this does not mean the earth is dependent upon the waters of the earth for its *sustainability*. The scientists would tell us this, and they are partially right, but here and other places in the Word of God, we are told that Jesus Christ is the One who superglues the universe and this world in place.

- **Acts 17:28**—for in Him we live and move and exist...
- **Colossians 1:17**—He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.
- **Hebrews 1:1-3a**—God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, ² in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. ³ And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.

Application: What does this mean for you? Because the world is upheld by His nail-scarred hands, we must worship Him or stand in defiance against Him. We must give God His due. If we are to be

ready for the King, *we must realize how "big" He is*. As we walk around in God's world, David now leads us to think about what is required to go up to...

B. The Lord's Hill (vv.3-6)

David gains our attention with a rhetorical question.

³Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD?
And who may stand in His holy place?

This is not so much *a question to answer*, as much as *an invitation to think*, to ponder, to consider, and to marvel at. What does David call us to think about?

1. Creation's King can be approached.

You remember David has asked this question before in Psalm 15:1, "*O Lord, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?*" The hill of the Lord is a reference to Jerusalem, which sat atop Mount Zion, "His holy place."

The searching question is, who may be the guest of God? Who among earth's inhabitants is acceptable and able/fit to come before this sovereign King? Who is spiritually qualified to fellowship with this awesome King? How must a person prepare Himself to approach Him?

In ancient times to approach a monarch without permission meant instant death. But here, David supposes that sinners are not only allowed to ascend and stand in the very presence of God Himself, but also to be welcomed there by God!

- **Psalm 65:4**—How blessed is the one whom You choose and bring near to You
To dwell in Your courts.
We will be satisfied with the goodness of Your house,
Your holy temple.

There is no greater privilege that you could desire in life. It was David's highest priority.

- **Psalm 27:4**—One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek:
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the LORD
And to meditate in His temple.

Just think of it. The God who *holds* and *sustains* the world in His hand makes it possible for ruined, imperfect sinners to actually "*meet Him*" and "*come to Him*" without the threat of instant death.

Charles Spurgeon, the English prince of preachers, once preached a sermon in 1868 on Luke 15:1, "*Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near to Him to listen to Him.*" He entitled it, "The Approachableness of Jesus." This is what David is inviting us to see. The "awesome" God of verses 1-2, is also *approachable*. The *cosmic* King is also *congregational*; that is, He gathers forgiven sinners to Himself. Although we are *creatures*, we can ascend into the hill of the Creator stand in His holy place. What a big smile this should bring to your heart! What a marvel this is!

But what if you tried to come into His temple, at your own time and of your own will? What would happen to you?

Jesus told a parable of the wedding feast that a king gave for his son in Matthew 22. Here are the key players in the parable. God is the King. The Son is the Lord Jesus Christ. The slaves are the Apostles and Prophets. The wedding feast is the Marriage Supper of the Lamb or Christ.

- **Matthew 22:3-7**—And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come. ⁴ Again he sent out other slaves saying, 'Tell those who have been invited, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are *all* butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast."' ⁵ But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, ⁶ and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. ⁷ But the King was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire.

The first invitation represents the Gospel that came to the Jews. The persecuted, the prophets, and the apostles. One of the ways the King judged them was in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The second invitation now goes out to the Gentiles.

- **Matthew 22:3-8-12**—Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. ⁹ Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find *there*, invite to the wedding feast.' ¹⁰ Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests. ¹¹ "But when the King came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, ¹² and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?' And the man was speechless.

The reason the King asked this question is that wedding garments were provided for every citizen regardless of age, income, or status.

This is true of every sinner today. The Gospel offers to sinners the righteousness of Christ that covers the sinner like a robe. All our righteous deeds are like filthy rags (*Is.64:6*). But Christ died for our sins, and He lived a perfect life to make us acceptable to stand before God. He is freely offered to you in the Gospel by faith. What are His terms? If you would have His life, you must surrender yours. If you would have His righteousness, you must turn from your sin. Without Him, we are unfit to stand in the presence of a holy God without the threat of divine judgment.

But if you refuse Christ and try to come to heaven your own way or by any other means, then Jesus reveals at the end of the parable what will be true of you.

- **Matthew 22:13-14**—Then the King said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' ¹⁴ For many are called, but few *are* chosen."

Is the King calling you today? Do not try to enter some other way! He sees all and knows all! You will be *excluded* and removed as an intruder. No one has a right to be in His holy Presence, but He chooses—for purposes known only to Himself—those who will join Him at the wedding feast of His Son. Will you heed the invitation and come to God's Son, God's way?

David invites us to think about this marvelous privilege. *Creation's King can be approached*. But he also explains:

2. Creation's King requires holiness by all who approach Him.

What is required to worship in God's holy place? David gives us a thumbnail sketch—for those who come to His holy place must share in His holiness. Four requirements are given which place the whole of our lives under inspection. So, don't run or turn away now. Imagine yourself going through airport security. You come to that metal detector and stand on those two yellow footprints in that tubular scanner. What is God looking for as He examines your life and mine?

⁴He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood
And has not sworn deceitfully.

- a. **Clean hands: Are your hands clean?** "Hands" here refer to the purity of our outward deeds or actions. Pilate tried to wash his hands of guilt in Christ's death, but no ritual could cleanse him from his sin (*Matt.27:24*). To have clean hands points to a pattern of life that is free from charges of wrong or inconsistency.
- b. **A pure heart: Is your heart pure?** If hands refer to *our outward deeds*, the "heart" refers to *our inner disposition*. Our desires. Under survey is our *character* and our *conduct*, the *inner* life and the *outer* life.
- c. **A true soul: Is your soul true?** "*Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood.*" The lifting up of the soul spells out for us *what giving yourself to worthless, vain, idolatry really is*. It is falsehood. An idol is anything or anyone that a person loves, fears, or serves more than God. And what David reveals to us here is this: there can be no divided affections in the worship of God. Devotion must be to God alone.
- d. **A straight tongue: Is your tongue straight?** "*And has not sworn deceitfully.*" To swear falsely is to make false promises under the pretense of telling the truth. The person who does so seeks to gain an advantage over others. What this simply means is that one must be true to their word. The person who fellowships with God must be marked by *integrity*.

I can hear someone saying, "Pastor, this is why I don't come to Christ! I know I cannot measure up! I know I fall short." You're right. But you are forgetting one very important thing: no one measures up except One—the King Himself.

These requirements are not stipulations to frustrate us, but mandates to facilitate proper, true, transforming worship. What is the benefit for the person who comes to God in *holiness* and *humility*?

⁵He shall receive a blessing from the LORD
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

⁶This is the generation of those who seek Him,
Who seek Your face—even Jacob. *Selah*.

If the mandate is followed, then the worshipper is *accepted* and receives the blessing of God and *vindication* that their faith is saving. The "**righteousness**" spoken of here is an Old Testament

expression of *justification by faith*. When we repent and believe, God imputes the righteousness of Christ to our account. But the way we know this is true is that *we live a life of repentance and faith*. This shows that you are a genuine seeker of God's face and His pleasure, not just His hand, for Jesus said, "*such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers*" (John 4:24).

Jacob is mentioned right before a snow globe, stop and ponder, "Selah" moment. If we should ask, "Why are you bringing up Jacob, David?" There is no question that David is placing Jacob before our eyes as *a sample of a seeker of God's face*.

Jacob was no saint. Jacob had been a devious schemer, a heel-grabber, and a manipulator. Then in Genesis 32, he finds himself between a rock and a hard place. He had nowhere else to turn. He was convinced that his brother Esau was going to kill him, so he cried out to God for help.

He tried to negotiate and buy the favor of his brother and was willing to give up many of his goods. But God met him in the form of a man, and He and Jacob wrestled until daybreak. In the struggle, Jacob recognized somehow that this was no ordinary man. The man dislocated the socket of his thigh, or the place of his strength. The average man would have given up, but Jacob persisted. He was at the end of himself, but he would not let go, he wanted the blessing of God.

- **Genesis 32:26-30**—Then he said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." But he said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." ²⁷ So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." ²⁸ He said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed." ²⁹ Then Jacob asked him and said, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And he blessed him there. ³⁰ So Jacob named the place Peniel, for *he said*, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved."

Selah. What are we to think about? Jacob's name and character were changed after he confessed his nature and received the blessing from the Lord. I believe the reason David brings up Jacob here is to show what a true believer looks like. They have an *attitude like Jacob*—they are *desperate*! They have nowhere to turn. They humbly acknowledge their crooked nature, but they hold on to God for dear life, because without Him, they have no hope. Does this describe you?

Those who would worship in the Lord's hill must approach the King having had their nature changed, and they come in humble holiness. The Lord's world. The Lord's hill. Finally,

C. The Lord's Coming (vv.7-10)

⁷ Lift up your heads, O gates,
And be lifted up, O ancient doors,
That the King of glory may come in!

⁸ Who is the King of glory?
The LORD strong and mighty,
The LORD mighty in battle.

⁹ Lift up your heads, O gates,
And lift *them* up, O ancient doors,
That the King of glory may come in!

¹⁰ Who is this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts,
He is the King of glory. *Selah.*

Where is this scene? Is it on earth or heaven? Perhaps it is both. On earth, the setting is, according to 2 Samuel 6, David returning to the city of Jerusalem with the ark of the covenant, which represented Yahweh's presence. So when the ark arrived, it was as if Yahweh arrived.

Picture the procession as it wound its way up the hillside. As it gets closer to the summit of the hill, David asks these questions to ramp up the drama of the scene. Picture David, standing before the barred gates of the ancient city. He lifts his voice, *"Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in!"*

He uses a literary device known as personification, which attributes personality to inanimate objects. The thought is that the gates are unworthy to stand in the way of the King. The city "**gates**" need to stretch themselves open to make way for the entrance of earth's sovereign King! The "**doors**" and the gates are synonymous. "Prepare yourself," says David, that "the King of glory may come in!"

From within the walls of the city and from the advancing choir procession outside, a rhetorical reply comes, "**Who is the King of glory?**" But the people know who He is! Do you know who the King of glory is?

The answer comes from the King and all the soldiers and people outside and from within! It is razor-sharp. It cuts like glass. It is authoritative! It is brief—but you can imagine it coming with a full-throated burst—"**The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle!**" The ark coming into the city was foreshadowing what took place at the ascension of Christ! When Christ ascended back to heaven, He entered glory as the victor with the spoils of war in His hand. Death defeat. The grave crushed. The sin atoned for. Satan defanged!

But notice the shift between verses 9 and 10. In verses 7 and 9, He is the King of glory. He is heaven's King. He is the church's King. But in verse 10, **He is the Lord of hosts**. Who are the hosts?

Psalms 148 describes every creature under the Captain's orders. He is the Captain who commands the angelic hosts of heaven. The archangel Michael is the chief commander under His charge. The entire regimen of angels—Seraphim, Cherubim, and others—are heaven's Calvary ready to ride into battle. He summons all of the energies of earth to fulfill His will. He commanded the rains to bring judgment in Noah's day. He commanded the ten plagues of Egypt (blood, frogs, gnats, flies, livestock, boils, hail, locusts, darkness, and the death of the firstborn). The winds obey Him; the seas obey Him; the stars are all numbered and lined up as a disciplined army. He spoke to disease, and it vanished. He rebuked winds and waves, and there came great calm. He silenced demons and commanded them to come out, and they left their victims. He demanded that the grave would give up His friend Lazarus, and he came hopping out of the tomb still wrapped in burial cloths. He spoke in the beginning, and it was done. Nature bows before Him. Heaven and earth adore Him. What a mighty God we serve! Who is He? He is creation's King. He is the church's King. He is the coming King.

Christ is coming again. Behold He is coming with the clouds. When He comes, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father. He comes to receive unto Himself His own blood bought people. He is coming that He may bring many sons to glory.

He is the One that the angel testified about in **Acts 1:11**,

- They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”

He is the One who stands at the wooden door of our hearts and says,

- **Revelation 3:20**—Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.

Though He stands as a Warrior with battle array, He comes with gentleness, summoning rebels to surrender. If you hear His voice and open your heart, He will come into your life, cleanse you from your sins, lift your soul in the sorrows of life, and free you from sin’s slavery.

Who is He?

He is the *crucified* Christ, He is *conquering* Christ, and He is the *coming* Christ. David sees past the cross, the resurrection, and the ascension. He looks past the church age to a time when the Lord suddenly will come to His temple. Suddenly He will appear, like a thief—*no warning*. Suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child—there will be no escape! For the Christian, He will be the blessed hope—the One we’ve been waiting for. For the unsaved, no explanation will be needed. You will recognize Him, for His arrival will declare His universal monarchy. John wrote in Revelation 19

- And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. ¹² His eyes *are* a flame of fire, and on His head *are* many diadems; and He has a name written *on Him* which no one knows except Himself. ¹³ *He is* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white *and* clean, were following Him on white horses. ¹⁵ From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. ¹⁶ And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

David would have us to know that If we are to be ready for the King, we must realize *how “big” He is*. He has Creator rights. If we are to be ready for the King, we must realize *how “holy” He is*. Without holiness, no one will see the Lord. If we are to be ready for the King, we must realize *how “mighty” He is*.

Conclusion:

After Queen Victoria of England had ascended to her throne, she went, as is the custom of British royalty, to hear a special presentation of Messiah. She had been instructed about her conduct by those who knew the rules of protocol for the royal family, being told that she must not rise when the other stood at the singing of “The Hallelujah Chorus.” When the magnificent chorus was being sung, and the singers were shouting, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth,” she sat with great difficulty. It seemed as if she would rise in spite of the custom of kings and queens. But finally, when they came to that climatic part of the chorus, where they proclaimed Christ as King of kings, suddenly, the young queen rose and stood with a bowed head. Breaking all the rules of royal etiquette, she felt compelled to rise as if she were taking off her crown and casting it at His feet.

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