

How Long God?

Part 5: Revival Habakkuk 3:1-2

Tim Badal | August 20, 2017



We've been looking at this obscure book in the Bible, one that is often neglected, but one that has a special place in the heart of God. Nowhere else in Scripture, other than these three chapters, is there a book solely dedicated to a conversation between God and one of His children. No one else is part of their dialogue. Their conversation gives us an inside view of what communication with God can look like.

To be sure, this conversation reflects how we often don't like our circumstances or how our lives are going, and we also don't always like God's answers to our questions. But the prophet Habakkuk demonstrates for us what it means to wait patiently on the Lord. He says, "Lord, it's not about me or my comfort or what I think is best." Rather, Habakkuk gives himself to God, saying, "Do with me as You will. Take my life as an offering. I'll go wherever You want me to go and say whatever You want me to say. I'm ready to obey, regardless of the circumstances."

It has been refreshing over these past few weeks to see that the world doesn't revolve around us. Habakkuk reminds us that we don't rule the universe. We don't get to determine the course of our lives. This reality compels us to turn to God for His answers and His peace when trouble comes our way. As we've learned, Habakkuk lived in a time of great violence, treachery and tribulation.

It almost seemed as though his world was out of control, and we have that same sense today. We live in a time when our newsfeeds describe all kinds of turmoil, not only in our country but everywhere. People are mowing down crowds with their vehicles. The scenes are heartbreaking. Our country is more dis-unified than ever before. Our impulse is to say, "God, where are You? You say You're in control, that You have everything all figured out, but it sure does seem as though evil is prevailing and righteousness is losing."

But in Habakkuk's tumultuous time, God declared to him—and to us today—that amidst great chaos, He remains in control. If in the years to come someone asks you if you've ever learned anything from the book of Habakkuk, you can answer, "I learned that when the world is falling apart, God is still in control." If you really understand and believe that, your life will be much easier to live, because you'll leave to God the things only He can deal with and you'll understand that what you most need to concern yourself with is your obedience to Him. It's not up to us to figure out all the wrongs, or to address all the world's injustices. We must simply tell God that we believe He rules. He created everything and He controls all things. That's what we see in Habakkuk's life. He lets God do His job and he seeks to do his.

This brings us to the third chapter of Habakkuk, which is the final part of the book. As we'll see, God gives His prophet a vision that is both amazing and yet frightening. He lifts the veil and allows Habakkuk to see into what He has done, what He is doing and what He is going to do. We'll look more closely next week at Habakkuk's response, but I want you to see now what he says in Habakkuk 3:16: "I hear, and my body trembles; my lips quiver at the sound; rottenness enters into my bones." He's uneasy and sick to his stomach. He continues, "My legs tremble beneath me. Yet I will quietly wait for the day of trouble to come upon people who invade us."

Habakkuk is determined to wait on the Lord. In the face of all God has declared to him, he chooses to wait. He has learned what it means to live by faith. In Habakkuk 2:4, God declared that the righteous will live by faith. If you call yourself a child of God, the way you prove that is not through your profession, or through an activity such as baptism or communion or responding to an altar call.

The way you show you're a child of God is you live by faith. Habakkuk is able to deal with the tribulations in his life without falling. He's not consumed with fear, nor is he anxious about the future.

What does a man who is led by faith do? He prays. God has given him bad news, and he realizes that life will never be the same for him or for his neighbors. But we don't see him freaking out or tied up in knots. Rather, what he does is get on his knees. In our text today, Habakkuk 3:1–2, we'll see Habakkuk's prayer, in which we'll see what it means for us to live by faith. In the middle of that prayer, and the subject of my sermon today, is the word "Revival."

A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth. ² O Lord, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O Lord, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.

Habakkuk's prayer continues on, but we're going to stop here and see what God has to say to us today. In the middle of this two-verse sermon we read, "In the midst of the years revive it..." That word revive simply means to restore something to life—something that is dead or obsolete or broken. Revival brings these things back to good working order.

Habakkuk says to God, "Our spirituality is broken. The people of Judah are no longer following You or making You their priority. Rather, they're pursuing other gods. God, please change that. Please take our dead religion and make it fresh and new again. By Your Spirit, please revive the hearts of the people."

The word "revive" is the basis for our churchy word "revival." You've probably heard people say, "We need a good revival." Some of you may have come from a tradition where a revival was a scheduled week of services. These services went Sunday morning, Sunday night, Monday night, Tuesday night and Wednesday night. For one week a year, the focus was on the need to get right with God.

Others of you may think of revivals as big evangelistic events held by someone like Billy Graham, where thousands of people would come to a stadium to hear a message of how Jesus is the Savior and how they, through repentance and faith, can come into a relationship with Him. After the sermon, people would go forward to pray to receive Christ as their Savior.

While all of these in some ways reflect the idea of revival, the concept is greater than this. The revival Habakkuk was calling for was not just an isolated experience or an extra week of services. It was more than hype and manifestations. Rather, he was looking for the people to gain a glimpse of God's glory. What was this glory? Habakkuk was asking for the people to get a view of God from the perspective of heaven, just as the angels could see Him. They needed to see Him as all-powerful, all-knowing, great and majestic. In essence, revival comes when people are gripped by the awareness of Who God is.

Why was this so important to Habakkuk? In Habakkuk 2:14, we are told that God will be in a perpetual state of revival on earth: "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." God will continue to work on earth until His glory—all of Who He is—will be made known to all "as the waters cover the sea." At the end of chapter two we also read, "But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him."

When a person's heart is revived, he doesn't see the distractions of the world around him. Rather, he sees God as Isaiah did in Isaiah 6, "High and lifted up" in His temple, being worshipped by the angels. Isaiah was overwhelmed by the greatness of God. And to the extent that we see God in His holy temple, we too will be silenced. Once we have a glimpse of His glory, it changes the way we understand Him—and it also changes the way we understand our own lives.

Habakkuk is experiencing revival and it has changed the way he understands his circumstances and his Creator. In a world broken by sin, revival comes as God heals and restores and changes everything. The heart of revival is far less about the crowds or the preacher—it is more a holy moment between a person and God.

Looking for a definition of revival, I turned to one of my favorite authors, J.I. Packer. This is how he describes it: "Revival is God touching minds and hearts in an arresting, devastating, exalting way. Arresting—it grips our heart. Devastating—it shatters who we are as individuals." It breaks down these presuppositions we have that we're God, when we're not. It shows us that we're finite and frail and flawed. And after we have been arrested and devastated, revival points us to God and we see Him as brilliant and great and awesome.

Revival draws us to Him which is accomplished by working from the inside out, not the outside in. It starts in our hearts. Habakkuk has seen the greatness of God and he has seen that his own issues—big and troublesome though they are—are no match for the glory of the God Who resides on His throne in the holy temple. So after glimpsing God, Habakkuk realizes that even though his world seems out of control, the God he has encountered has a plan—and He is executing that plan perfectly. Habakkuk realizes

that one day God's presence will fill the earth, causing everyone on earth to stand in silence before Him. In short he knows, "God is great. Therefore, my problems are small."

If your problems are bigger than the God you believe in, you will not be able to experience revival. How do you know if your problems are bigger than God? Because you're worrying about them. You're fretting and complaining about them. You're making your life decisions based on a belief that these problems are yours to solve. You aren't praying. You're never seeking out God's wisdom through His Word. Rather, your mind is completely focused on the problems themselves. That makes your problems God and demoting God to be something less than them.

So the question we need to ask is this: has revival taken place in our lives? It was an encounter that changed Habakkuk—and God wants us to have that same encounter with Him. Habakkuk is no greater than us. But in order for us to see God in His glory, we need to take what we know of Him and by faith apply it to our lives. But what does it really look like for the righteous to live by faith?

Some years ago Amanda and I watched a TV program called "Friday Night Lights." It was about the ups and downs and the drama of a high school football team in Texas. We have football here, but I have found out from those who have lived in Texas that we really don't have football. Football is king in Texas. One of the things I really loved about the program was the coach. He was a frail, humble, honest man—a good man, trying to do a good work. I particularly appreciated his motto and I think it would fit well in a spiritual application, as it describes what revival is really about. Here's what he said to his team: "Clear eyes, full heart—can't lose."

What Habakkuk was experiencing was clear eyes. Gone were the distractions. Gone were his fears and anxieties. He had a clear picture of Who God was. God became very big in his mind. He had proven Himself to be a God Who could handle every circumstance of life. He also had a full heart. Seeing God had moved him from a place of worry to a place of worship. His fright was replaced by faith. And because Habakkuk had clear eyes and a full heart, he knew God couldn't lose. So amidst cancer, God can't lose. Amidst racism, God can't lose. Amidst worldwide turmoil and war, God can't lose. Amidst our problems and our troubling situations, God can't lose.

How can you know you're living a life of revival? How's your vision? How's your heart? Do you believe God is the God Who can't lose? I see three things that characterized this awesome change in the prophet Habakkuk's life.

Revival comes when God's people turn to Him in humility.

First, Habakkuk turned to God in humility—and that's what we need to do as well. From the middle of chapter one all the way through chapter two, Habakkuk hears some pretty serious news from God. He is going to bring judgment and discipline first upon His own people, and then on their enemies as well. These revelations are not pleasant. God is going to bring pain.

Habakkuk could have responded in a number of ways. He could have fought what God revealed and refused to follow Him. He could have become filled with fear and run. Or he could decide, by faith, to sit, listen, believe and obey the words of the Lord. He does the latter. He demonstrated what the righteous are supposed to do when difficult news comes—we are to pray. Why is prayer so important and what keeps us on our knees?

Turning to God involves getting rid of our distractions.

As we turn to God in humility, we must at the same time get rid of all distractions. Habakkuk was about to get very difficult news, news that would turn his world upside down and put a lump in his throat. But look at the prayer Habakkuk chose to pray, "according to the Shigionoth." There's that funny word you can use later today—Shigionoth. This word is only used twice in all of Scripture—in Habakkuk 3 and Psalm 7.

Historians don't know exactly where it came from, but they do know what it means. It's a musical term, but it doesn't have anything to do with an instrument. He's not praying "according to the guitar, drum or the piano." Rather, it refers to a certain tone or meter or tempo of the song. Most commentators believe it represented strong emotion, an erratic wandering of notes and melodies, and could be characterized as wild tumult. The song could be compared to a violent storm. You know that music your kids play, where you can't understand any of the words? It could be a song of the Shigionoth.

Back in my teen years, we used to blast music from speakers, trying to score high on the Richter Scale; aiming for tsunami-level sounds. Now everything goes directly into their ears. My mother would come into my room and ask, "What is that man even talking about?" I would say, "Mom, it's music by the Shigionoths." She didn't buy it, by the way.

Habakkuk was praying in tempo with an erratic form of song. His prayer was all over the place. It was messy. It didn't have any apparent pattern. It didn't follow a beat. In fact, both uses of this word have a similar theme. In Habakkuk 3 there are earthquakes, crumbling mountains, pestilence, floods, arrows, spears and all kinds of calamity. In Psalm 7 we have vicious lions, trampled lives, rage, swords, flaming arrows and violence. This is a troublesome song. One commentator said what Habakkuk is singing and praying about is a time of great upheaval. His world has been turned upside down. In that moment, he must rid himself of all distractions and turn his attention to God, because if he doesn't, he'll be undone.

When we were on our honeymoon in Florida, Amanda and I had the bright idea of chartering a fishing boat and going out into the ocean. I had this great picture of me sitting in one of those chairs with the rod and reel, and hooking myself this beautiful swordfish. So I paid the big money and said, "Amanda, you're going to watch your new husband do this because he's good at everything."

I didn't catch any fish. Not a single one. But do you know what I caught? Seasickness. We were in this little boat, out in the ocean, going up and down, up and down, left and right. As we were going up, my stomach went down. As we were going down, my stomach went up. As I was turning green, the captain saw me and said, "Listen, you're bad for business if you start puking all over the place. This isn't going to look good on Facebook." Well, seriously, I thought I was dying. All thoughts of doing anything went out the door. Why? Because my life was in upheaval.

Actually the captain did say something to me in that moment and I think it's the only thing I remember. He said, "You've got to quit focusing on the waves. Cut it out. Focusing on the waves is only going to make you sicker. So stop." I said, "Well, what am I supp...upp...osed to do?" He said, "Put your attention on something fixed." Stop looking at the variables of life, the up-and-down waves, and find something constant, something immovable. So I did that. And do you know what? Everything changed. I told the man, "I think the waters are calmer." He responded, "No. Your focus just got better."

Some of us right now are like I was on that fishing trip. The turmoil and troubles of life are our focus. Maybe it's something personal—a medical report or the job or your finances or your marriage. You're up and down; you're left and right. You're sick to your stomach. You're filled with dread. Your purposes are out the door. I was out there to catch a marlin or a swordfish. That idea was gone. I never touched a fishing pole that day. I held on to the side, thinking I was going to die.

Some of you have given up on God's calling because you're thinking, "I'm going to throw up at some point. This is more than I can bear." And Habakkuk is saying the same thing the captain of that little boat said to me: "Get your eyes off the waves—the circumstances of life—and focus on the only Immovable Object in our world." That Immovable Object isn't your wealth, your marriage, your children or your job. It isn't Washington, D.C. It is God and God alone. When you focus on Him, the waves continue to go up and down, but your constant has put you on an even keel. Get rid of the distractions.

Turning to God involves recognizing our dependency.

In the middle of the chaos of a life of Shigionoth, we must remember that we need God in our lives every day. One person said it this way: "May I never forget that on my best day I still need God as desperately as I did on my worst day." Habakkuk knew he needed God, and in his Shigionoth prayer—an erratic prayer that came out of an erratic life of erratic circumstances, the wild ride God had him on—he focused on God.

Notice that in verse two he says, "O LORD." When that word is in all capitals, it refers to God's holy name: Yahweh. If you're new to church, you may not know what that is. Yahweh was the covenant name of God. When Moses asked Him, "Who are You? Who is sending me to Egypt? I need to tell people Who You are." God says, "Tell them I AM. I'm Yahweh. I am your God." This is the relational name of God.

My dad's proper name is William. His friends call him Bill. I call him Dad. Yahweh is our Dad. It's an intimate relationship. There aren't many people who get to call William Badal "Dad." I'm one of just a few people. My wife can call him that. My brother and his wife call him that. It's a relational, covenant name between me and my father. God tells His children, "You don't have to call me Jehovah. You don't have to call me by My attributes. Because you're a child of Mine, you're in My family, you get to call me Yahweh."

Habakkuk says, "Listen, O Lord, I need You. I need You to remind me that Your promises remain true even when the going gets tough. I know tough times are coming and I want to know if the promises You made to the patriarchs and the other prophets are

still true." We do this today when we read Scripture. When Paul told the Romans they were more than conquerors through Christ Jesus (Romans 8:31–39), or that all things work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:26–30), we want to believe those words apply to us as well. When trouble comes, we need to acknowledge that we are helpless without God. We turn to Him in those times because we believe He cares for us.

In 1870, a business man from Chicago named Horatio Spafford had become a close associate of D.L. Moody, who founded Moody Bible Institute and pastored what is now known as Moody Memorial Church. After the Chicago fire that decimated most of his investments, he decided that he, his wife and their four children would get on an ocean liner and head to Great Britain to accompany D.L. Moody in his evangelistic crusades that fall. As he was preparing to leave, an emergency came up in one of his businesses that forced him to stay back and take a later ship. So he put his wife and four daughters on the ocean liner, kissed them goodbye and said, "I'll be there in a couple weeks." But a couple weeks later he received a telegraph from his wife in England that read, "Saved alone." The ocean liner had sunk and his daughters had drowned. His wife was found floating in the open ocean after what was believed to be 36–50 hours, holding on to a piece of debris.

He then got on another ocean liner and midway through the trip, the captain came to him and said, "This is where the ocean liner went down." Think about it. You may be having a hard Sunday, but try swallowing the loss of your four daughters, ages 11 to 2. Horatio Spafford wasn't a prophet or an angel—he was a man just like you and me. He lived not too far from here on the north side of Chicago. Many of you may not recognize his name, but if you've been around church, you probably know the hymn he wrote.

As his ship went by the place where his daughters had been lost, he wrote these words:

When peace like a river attendeth my way When sorrows like sea billows roll Whatever my lot, You have taught me to say It is well, it is well with my soul.

When trouble comes and we turn to God—when the righteous live by faith—then God doesn't remove our problem. He didn't resurrect those four daughters. But God enabled Horatio Spafford to see beyond the death of his daughters to see the glory that was coming. He knew he could have had to face his pain without God, but he also knew that God was going through the trial with him. As difficult as it was, he knew that in those moments of chaos, God was in control. "It is well, it is well with my soul."

Revival comes when God's people trust God fully.

Do you realize your need for dependency? Have you gotten rid of the distractions? You've not really turned to God until those two things are true. If Habakkuk was going to keep his eyes off his trouble and keep them on God, he had to believe that God was capable of handling what was coming.

A couple weeks ago I told you that I do not like roller coasters. Now, I'll ride them—even the ones that go upside down or are really high. I do that because of peer pressure, but I really don't like them. Here's why. For the two minutes that I'm on one of them, I'm envisioning every nut and bolt coming loose. I'm thinking, "Someone didn't do their job and part of this thing will careen off the tracks—and I'll die." So the whole experience is a matter of me holding on for dear life and thinking, "I hope they did their job. I hope they did their job." Then the guy sitting next to me with his arms in the air is hollering, "Whoo-hoo! Yeah!! Ha, this is great!" I'm thinking, "That idiot doesn't know, Lord. Forgive him—he knows not what he does." And I keep holding on, because I think that lever thing over me is not going to hold this large carcass in place when we flip upside down. (That's not funny, by the way.)

I don't have any trust in that harness, so I'm driving fingernails into my hands. I'm holding on tight because I just know that bolt won't hold me. That lever won't keep me safe. I have no trust in the creator of that ride, believing that ride will keep me safe from the beginning to the end. All the while everyone else on the ride is having the time of their life. Why? Because they can trust that the creator of that roller coaster was faithful to care for their safety and all they needed to do was enjoy the ride.

Some of us right now don't really trust God. You're like me on the roller coaster of life. You're holding on, thinking, "God, I know You missed it somewhere. I know You didn't tighten that bolt in my life in this area or that area. So I'm going to believe because You didn't do it, I have to do it myself."

When the harness of life is fastened, God says, "Hold on. In this world you're going to have troubles. You're going to go upside down every once in a while. There are going to be sharp turns to the left and the right. It's going to get bumpy around here. Sometimes your fanny will be lifted off the seat. Get ready." You're thinking, "I know God doesn't have it all figured out. I know He hasn't taken care of all the circumstances that may come." And then you notice the people around you with arms in the air, saying, "God, You're awesome. God, You're great. Even when tough times come, You're good and Your love endures forever." They're enjoying the ride. The difference is simply that you don't trust and they do. You believe God has missed it somewhere and because of that you have to do His job, instead of trusting fully that He's got it all figured out.

Habakkuk said, "I'm not going to try to figure this out. I'm not going to try to hold on for dear life, because the harness God has me in is capable of holding me safe. Yeah, the trip will be rocky and jerky. We're going to go this way and that, and there will be unexpected slopes and turns and stops. But in the middle of all that, instead of thinking I have to protect myself, I'm going to trust God." Some of us quite frankly are not trusting God right now and we are hating every minute of this life, because we're more doubtful about the ability of the Creator and more trusting in someone He created.

Trusting God fully means we must trust His Word and His Ways.

So how do we do this trusting? We must learn to trust both His Word and His Ways. Habakkuk says in verse two, "I have heard the report of you." How did he hear these things? From the Word of God. As a little boy in Judah, he had learned about God. Every day he would learn more and more about how God was faithful to his forefathers, the patriarchs—how He was faithful to take care of them in times of great need.

Every once in a while I catch ESPN and I especially enjoy the morning report of the top ten plays of the day before. They're usually plays from the major league or professional teams, but the ones I really like are the top plays of a high school or junior high event. It might be a last-second shot or some sort of miraculous goal. In essence, these ten highlights say to me, "If you miss the little, you miss the incredible."

Every day, God's Word should bring you the top ten plays of the day. We'll say, "Wow, look at what God did here. Look at what God did there. Whoa! Look at what God did in that situation!" Each time I watch that ESPN show, this is what comes to mind: "How did they do it? How can I do it? And wow, they're pretty awesome." When we read the Scriptures, we need to think, "Wow, God, how did You do that? God, I would sure love to do that. And wow, God, You're amazing." When we focus on His Word, we're going to be able to trust Him.

One of my greatest concerns for the church in America is that the reason there is not revival in our churches today is because we don't know the God Who can revive us. Why don't we know Him? Because study after study tells us Christians don't know the Scriptures. How can we know God can do the miraculous in our day if we didn't know what He's done in the past? We don't know what He's capable of, because we haven't read the Bible.

Sadly, what you hear in many churches today is, "Don't bring your Bible—we'll put it on the screen. You don't have to study the Scriptures—we'll give you the spiritual pep talk you need." I get it—that's entertaining. But even though it may seem old-fashioned, even dry and boring, God says we need to know Who He is by studying the Scriptures, verse upon verse upon verse. We must let His Word do the teaching. We see that God is moving in the heart of Habakkuk and we can say, "If God can move in the circumstances he was facing, surely He can work in my circumstances." Not only do we need to see His Word, we also need to see His ways. Listen to what Habakkuk prays: "I have heard the report of you, and your work, O Lord, do I fear." Literally he's saying, "I stand in awe. I'm awestruck by what You are doing."

How awestruck are you by the work God is doing in your life? How awestruck are you regarding what God is doing in your family's life? How awestruck are you regarding what He's doing in the church you attend? How awestruck are you at how God is using you in your workplace or neighborhood or school? Do you see God on the move?

You might say, "No, I don't see Him—and that's His fault." Or maybe you say, "No, I don't, but it's my family's fault, or the church's fault." We can come up with all of these excuses, but let me tell you: God is on the move. He's working in people's lives. And if you're not experiencing revival, you don't have to go any farther than yourself. Are <u>you</u> in awe of what He's doing?

Tomorrow we will be part of an awe-inspiring eclipse that hasn't happened since 1979. I'm awe-inspired by the math that let them know that it was going to happen tomorrow. That's pretty amazing. We're going to see God's handiwork and we're going to stand

in awe. But God says each day should be awe-inspiring, because He is always on the move. Do you trust Him? Do you trust that He knows best?

Revival comes when God's people tell others about His activity.

Finally, we need to tell others about God's work and activity. Verse two says, "In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy." God is asking, "How are people going to know I'm moving in your world?" They will know it through you and through me.

We must tell what God did for others in the past.

We are changed by our study of Scripture and by seeing what He's done for others in the past. God has faithfully come through for His people in the past. Tomorrow, when a bad medical report comes or an unexpected bill lands at my front door or family troubles rise up or I lose my job, how do I know that I will be strong in that moment? I can know it, because I've seen how God has taken frail, broken people in the past and has faithfully walked them through their trials.

David faced Goliath and God walked him through it (1 Samuel 17). Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego stood before an unrighteous nation and were put into a fiery furnace—and God was equal to the task in saving them (Daniel 3). We need to have faith that what He has done in the past He will also do in the future.

We'll be starting our study of the book of Acts in a couple weeks in a series entitled "Unfinished." What God started in the book of Acts is still alive and well today—but are we experiencing it? Or are we saying, "Oh, that's just a story from the olden days."

We must tell what God is doing for us in the present.

Not only must we remember what God did for others in the past, but we also need to recognize what He is doing for us in the present. He is meeting our needs. He is carrying us through our trials. When we are given bad reports, He takes care of us. He ministers to us. He gives us the help we need.

How is God going to be made known? It's by us telling other people what He's done in the past and what He's doing today. How are we going to tell people about this? We need to be so awe-inspired by His Word that we'll read it daily. Then we'll take stock of our lives and see how that Word has changed us, making us different from what we were the day before. We'll tell people, "This is the work God is doing in my life! He's changing me. He's renewing and reviving me. I am not the same, nor will I ever be the same, because of what God has done."

When we turn to God and trust Him fully and when we tell others of His faithfulness, then and only then will we experience true revival. Then and only then will we experience what the prophet Habakkuk experienced. When we take this posture—as we'll see next week—God opens the curtain and reveals what He's going to do. And what we see will knock our socks off. Experience revival. Join with me in seeking the face of God, experiencing all He has to offer and let Him knock our socks off.

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