

From the Rapture to the Second Coming

Revelation 14: “Grace Before Judgment”



Chapter Highlights

- [Sealed by the Lamb](#)
- [The Gospel Preached](#)
- [Fall of Babylon](#)
- [An Angelic Warning](#)
- [Harvests of the Earth](#)

Chapter Aids

- [Let's Get Started](#)
- [Study Questions](#)
- [Chapter Wrap-Up](#)
- [Biblical Maps](#)
- [Biblical Time Lines](#)
- [Biblical Illustrations](#)
- [Biblical Tables and Charts](#)

Topical Index

- [Preserve and Protect](#)
- [Heavenly Harps](#)
- [You Would Have Had to Been There](#)
- [True to the End](#)
- [Faithful and True](#)
- [Proclaim the Gospel](#)
- [Death or Life, That is the Choice](#)
- [Babylon the Harlot](#)
- [Do Not Take The Mark](#)
- [Tormented by Fire](#)
- [No End to It](#)
- [Remain Faithful](#)
- [A Blessing to Die](#)
- [The Harvest](#)
- [Not Too Soon](#)
- [Swoosh](#)
- [Mercy, Not Another Angel](#)
- [And Yet, Another Angel](#)
- [Cast Them Out](#)
- [As High as a Horse's Bridle](#)



Let's Get Started

This chapter continues to tell us about peoples, nations, languages, and kings that will exist during the **Tribulation Period**. We will learn more about the 144,000 Jewish witnesses, the Tribulation Saints, the city of Jerusalem, and those who take the **Mark of the Beast**. We will also learn about **Armageddon** and **Babylon**.

Preserve and Protect

Revelation 14:1 Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.

After having the rise of the **Antichrist** and the **False Prophet** revealed to him, John now

sees Jesus standing on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, with his 144,000 Jewish witnesses gathered around him. These 144,000 are those believers who will have the name of Jesus and his Father written on their foreheads (Revelation 7:3).

What Others are Saying:

Hal Lindsey: This is a first magnitude miracle, since more than half the earth's population, including many thousands of the evangelists' converts will be wiped out during the horrors of the **Tribulation Period**.¹⁴¹

Remember This...

- ✓ Jesus will seal the 144,000 Jewish witnesses between the opening of the sixth and seventh seal. After this, when the seventh seal is opened and the seven trumpets sound:
 - **one-third of the earth and trees will burn up**
 - **one-third of the sea will turn to blood**
 - **one-third of all ships will be destroyed**
 - **one-third of the fresh water will be polluted**
 - **one-third of the light of the sun and moon will be diminished and multitudes will die**
- ✓ The **Antichrist** and his **False Prophet** will slaughter even more multitudes, and cause the Jews to flee from Jerusalem, but none of the dead will include the chosen 144,000. Jesus and his 144,000 will not be afraid to stand in the middle of the city, for he knows how to preserve and protect (Proverbs 2:8) himself and his own.
- ✓ The 144,000 will have the name of Jesus and the Father on their foreheads. The followers of the **False Prophet** will have the **name of the Antichrist** (Revelation 13:16, 17) on their foreheads.
- ✓ Mount Zion was the name of an ancient fortified hill controlled by the Jebusites (2 Samuel 5:6, 7). King David captured the hill and took up residence in the fortress at the top. He then built a city around the fortress which was called by two names:
 - the city of David
 - Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 11:4-8).
 - ✓ Today, Jerusalem is the political and religious capital of Israel.

Key Point

- ✓ Jesus knows how to preserve and protect his own.

Heavenly Harps

Revelation 14:2 And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps.

Singing will be heard in heaven for the 144,000 who stand unhurt on Mount Zion. They

alone have survived the disasters of the **Antichrist** and **False Prophet**.

What Others are Saying:

David Hocking: The idea of people playing harps (Psalm 144:9; 147:7; 149:3; 150:3) in heaven is not foreign to the Bible. ^{14:2}

You Would Have Had to Be There

Revelation 14:3 And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.

The heavenly multitude will sing a new song before the throne of God, the four living creatures, and the twenty-four elders. No one will understand their song except the 144,000.

Often we sing songs without really understanding what the writer went through or is trying to convey. We would have needed to be there to understand what inspired them. The next two verses will give us an idea of the demands placed on the 144,000 that enabled them to understand this new song.

What Others are Saying:

David Hocking: They alone, having experienced deliverance through their suffering and death, are able to sing its praise. ^{14:3}

True to The End

Revelation 14:4 These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb.

This is a controversial verse. Some say the 144,000 will be celibate, while others claim they will either not break their marriage vows, or will remain unmarried. Still others believe they will not commit spiritual fornication by worshipping idols and teaching false doctrines. It is difficult to say who is right, but we can be sure of some things:

- ✓ during the **Tribulation Period**, it will be difficult for these men to be married and be good husbands and fathers
- ✓ they will remain pure in spite of living in a world filled with immorality and spiritual fornication.

They follow the Lamb wherever he goes means they will abide in his presence. They will not stray from the will or teachings of Jesus. *They were purchased from among men* means they have been bought with the blood of Jesus. *Offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb* means they will be the first Jews saved during the **Tribulation Period** with more fruit to follow.

What Others are Saying:

Tim LaHaye: The Bible does *not* teach celibacy; in fact, no hint of it is found in Scripture. The Bible everywhere advocates that Christians be holy and virtuous, undefiled by the world. Misuse of sex has always been one of man's greatest problems; infidelity and immorality one of man's greatest temptations. ¹⁴⁻¹

Hal Lindsey: Most Bible commentators agree that the celibacy of these men refers not so much to *sexual* purity (although this is important) but to separation from *spiritual* fornication and adultery (James 4:4). ¹⁴⁻⁵

J. Vernon McGee: Therefore, the comment, *These are they which were not defiled with women for they are virgins* (kjv), is probably referring to chastity in both the literal sense and the spiritual sense. And this makes good sense, by the way. ¹⁴⁻⁶

Faithful and True

Revelation 14:5 No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.

Truthfulness will also characterize the 144,000. They will have nothing to do with the lies of the **Antichrist**, or the counterfeit doctrines of the **False Prophet**. They will be faithful to God and clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

Remember This...

✓ The 144,000...

stand with Jesus on Mount Zion	they are victorious with Jesus
marked on their foreheads	the names of Jesus and his Father
understand the heavenly new song	understand because of their trials
kept themselves pure	avoid immorality and idolatry
follow the Lamb wherever he goes	abide in his presence
purchased from among men	bought with the blood of Jesus
offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb	first Jews saved during the Tribulation
no lie was found in their mouths	faithful and true

Proclaim The Gospel

Revelation 14:6 Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language, and people.

Today, the Church is responsible for the proclamation of the gospel. But that will change after the Rapture. Jesus said, *This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come* (Matthew 24:14). Because the

Church will be in heaven, God will use the 144,000 Jews, the two witnesses, and even an angel (Galatians 1:8, 9) to spread his message. He will go to great lengths to give the world one last chance to be saved.

What gospel will the angel preach? The fact that it is called the eternal gospel is indication that it is identical to the gospel the Church preached. Some try to separate the gospel into different categories: the gospel of grace, the gospel of the kingdom, the gospel of judgment, the eternal gospel, Paul's gospel, etc. But all of these are part of the same gospel.

Key Point

- ✓ There is only *one* Gospel.

Key Symbols:

- ✓ The First Angel
 - *proclaims the eternal gospel to all people*

Death or Life... That Is The Choice

Revelation 14:7 He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water."

People will have two choices:

- ✓ believe the Antichrist, believe his lie, and worship him
- ✓ fear God (Psalm 111:10; 147:11) alone and give him all the glory. Choosing to follow the **Antichrist** can only lead to spiritual death, but choosing to follow God will surely lead to spiritual life.

What does it mean to fear God? Satan would have us believe it means to be afraid of God, but that is incorrect. To fear God means to have a holy respect for him, believe he exists, and believe he reigns and will judge all mankind. This kind of fear is the beginning of wisdom and it pleases God.

Babylon The Harlot

Revelation 14:8 A second angel followed and said, "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries."

Babylon is known as the city of **Satan** because of its long history of idolatry, astrology, witchcraft, and other occult practices. It is the **birthplace of many false doctrines** (Isaiah 47:9-13) and religions such as goddess worship.

In Acts 2:3 the new believers of Christ were accused of being drunk on new wine, but they were actually being filled with the Holy Spirit. In that chapter wine is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. In this chapter, maddening wine is a reference to demon possession (Luke 8:26-36). Making the nations drink this wine is a reference to **Babylon** forcing her **Satanic-inspired**

false religion on the world.

The ancient city died out many centuries ago, but during the 1980's and 90's Saddam Hussein poured hundreds of millions of dollars into rebuilding it. ^{14:7} The Persian Gulf War eventually slowed him down, but the rebuilt city will become a great center of religion and trade during the **Tribulation Period**. The **False Prophet** will locate the headquarters of his false religion there.

In verses 6 and 7, we learned that God will send the first angel of Chapter 14 to proclaim the gospel to all people. That angel will also proclaim the arrival of God's judgment. Then a second angel will declare the fall of **Babylon**. This is a judgment the **Old Testament prophets** (Isaiah 13:4-6, 19, 20; Jeremiah 51:7, 25, 26) predicted and it must come to pass. **Babylon's** fascination with the occult and her spread of a one-world harlot religion will bring a world-class fall.

The word *Fallen* is repeated twice to mean two separate falls or judgments. The false religious system will fall first when the **Antichrist** turns on it just after the mid-point of the **Tribulation Period**. The rebuilt city of **Babylon** will fall again when it is burned to the ground in one hour near the end of the **Tribulation Period** (more on this later in Chapter 17).

Key Symbols:

- ✓ Second Angel
 - *declares the fall of Babylon*

What Others are Saying:

J. Vernon McGee: I believe the ancient city of **Babylon** will be rebuilt though not at the same location, and that judgment upon it, which is predicted in the Book of Isaiah, is yet to come. ^{14:8}

J.H. Melton: Many religious leaders of the present day are very enthusiastic about what they call "Christian unity." Millions of professing Christians are being swept by sentimental appeals into the ecumenical monster, the **World Council of Churches**, the one-world church. Again and again people are heard to exclaim, "Wouldn't it be wonderful if we just had one great big church?" They will have their one great big church, but it will not be so wonderful. It will be a federation of God-defying, Christ-denying, apostate religious leaders. ^{14:9}

Do Not Take The Mark

Revelation 14:9 A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand,

A third angel will fly through the air with a third announcement. This announcement will concern those who worship the Antichrist, worship his image, and take his **Mark**. The first angel will preach the gospel and plead with people to worship God. The second angel will announce the fall of **Babylon**. This angel will warn people not to worship the **Antichrist** or

take the **Mark of the Beast**.

Key Symbols:

- ✓ Third Angel
 - *warns not to worship the **Antichrist** or take the **Mark of the Beast***

Tormented by Fire

Revelation 14:10 he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb.

This is one of those "you will reap what you sow" verses. **Babylon** will make *all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries*. Those who drink her wine will then be made to *drink the wine of God's fury* which will be unimaginable torment with burning sulfur. We know that burning sulfur increases the temperature of a fire, and therefore, in this case, would raise the level of suffering.

Everyone should heed this warning. Following the **Antichrist** and worshipping him will stir the wrath of God.

What Others are Saying:

J. Vernon McGee: If you believe that the Church is going through the **Great Tribulation**, you also believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is going to subject his own to the mingled, unmixed cup of his anger. I simply cannot believe that Christ would do this to the Church which he has redeemed. [14:10](#)

J.H. Melton: There are those who mock and jeer at the idea of an eternal hell for the wicked. Shall we believe our modern, sentimental philosophers, or abide by the Word of our God and his holy angels? [14:11](#)

No End To It

Revelation 14:11 And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name."

The smoke will roll up as if from a great volcano. Anyone who worships the beast, his image, or who receives the Mark will never rest.

What Others are Saying:

Oliver B. Greene: There are those today who tell us that the wicked will be burned... that there is no such thing as an everlasting hell. I would like for these fellows to explain to me why, if God is going to burn up the wicked, he does not put out the fire. Why does the smoke ascend up forever and ever? [14:12](#)

David Hocking: But does God punish people forever? It appears that his holiness, justice, and righteous character demand it. If we refuse his offer of salvation from sin, death, and hell, what else could he do and remain a holy God? His love, mercy, and forgiveness become totally meaningless if there is no retribution for our rebellion and sin. If there is eternal life for the believer then there is also eternal punishment for the unbeliever. ¹⁴⁻¹³

Tim LaHaye: It is well to remember that even matter cannot be annihilated, as any scientist will confirm. Elements can be changed, but they cannot be annihilated. If matter cannot be annihilated, how much less the immortal soul of man. ¹⁴⁻¹⁴

Remain Faithful

Revelation 14:12 This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.

God has decreed that the **Tribulation Period** will come and the **Antichrist** will be given power over the world for seven years. When the **Antichrist** goes on his rampage, there will not be much that believers can do. God cannot go back on his Word. His prophecies must be fulfilled. Believers will have to endure, keep his commandments, and remain faithful (Matthew 24:13; Luke 21:19).

A Blessing to Die

Revelation 14:13 Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."

This is a message of assurance and hope to those who will be trying to endure the trials of the **Tribulation Period**. God does not want believers to be afraid to die. It is a blessing to die in the Lord, but still, most of us do not want to die before our time.

A time will come during the **Tribulation** when it will be better for the saved to die (2 Timothy 2:11, 12) than to live. They will leave their grief and torment behind, enter heaven, and rest in the presence of God where their deeds will follow them (Matthew 6:20). This, obviously, is far better than taking the **Mark** and **suffering eternal damnation in hell**.

What Others are Saying:

John Hagee: Some Christians and Jews who are unable to flee to the Jordanian wilderness will be sheltered from the genocide by caring individuals (Matthew 25:31-46). Others will be captured and put to death, and these saints will receive a special blessing from God for their courageous devotion to him in the midst of horrific persecution and torture. ¹⁴⁻¹⁵

The Harvest

Revelation 14:14 I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one "like a son of man" with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his

hand.

A day is coming when Jesus will take a seat in the clouds (Daniel 7:13). He will wear a gold crown and hold a sharp sickle. The crown will identify him as a king, and the sickle will signify a coming harvest.

The Scriptures teach that Jesus will come back in the clouds as the King of kings and Lord of lords. He said, *The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth* (Matthew 13:39–42). It will be a terrible day for the lost because not only will it be their last day on earth, but their destiny will be sealed for eternity as well.

Key Symbols:

- ✓ Crown of Gold
 - *Jesus is king*
- ✓ Sharp Sickle
 - *the harvest is coming*

What Others are Saying:

David Hocking: Jesus was called "the Son of Man" throughout the Gospels. It was the title he most often used for himself. It is a reminder that our coming Judge is one who knows what we are like. His humanity gives him valid credentials for judging mankind. John 5:27 (nkjv) says the Father *has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.* [14-16](#)

Wim Malgo: The sharp sickle is raised in preparation for the harvest. This term is never used for the gathering of good grain, and therefore it means something terrible: He is coming here as the Judge of the world. [14-17](#)

Not Too Soon

Revelation 14:15 Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

As Jesus appears in the clouds, an angel will come forth from the heavenly temple. He will urge Jesus to take his sickle and reap because the time of judgment has arrived and the harvest is ready.

The Greek word for ripe, *xeraino*, means totally ripe, rotten, or withered. *The harvest of the earth is ripe* shows us that God will withhold his judgment until the last minute. When his judgment falls, the Church will have been raptured, most of the Tribulation Saints and Jews will have been killed, and the world will be totally corrupt. No one will be able to truthfully claim that Jesus acted too soon.

Key Symbols:

- ✓ Fourth Angel
 - *take your sickle and reap because the harvest is ready*

Swoosh

Revelation 14:16 So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.

Jesus will **swing his sharp sickle** (Joel 3:13, 14) over the earth. Many of the remaining unbelievers will be filled with terror and try to run and hide. Others will beg, cry, and plead, but it will be too late. They will have wasted their last chance, and he will take multitudes and **cast them into the eternal fire** (**Lake of Fire**, Matthew 25:41).

What Others are Saying:

J. Vernon McGee: The Lord Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, but he is also the *Judge* of all the world. ¹⁴⁻¹⁸

Mercy, Not Another Angel

Revelation 14:17 Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle.

This angel will come directly from the presence of God with a sharp sickle just like the one Jesus will have.

Key Symbols:

- ✓ Fifth Angel
 - *a second sickle from God*

And Yet Another Angel

Revelation 14:18 Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, because its grapes are ripe."

Yet another angel will come forth, this time from the altar in the heavenly temple. We read about this altar before in Revelation 8:3. It is where the Tribulation Saints call upon God to avenge their blood. Now this angel will urge the angel with the sharp sickle (the fourth angel of Chapter 14) *to gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, because its grapes are ripe*. Since Jesus is the **True Vine** (John 15:1), it is likely that the earth's vine is a reference to the **Antichrist**. The clusters of grapes will be the fruit of the earth's vine or those nations that follow the **Antichrist**.

This indicates two things:

- ✓ God will eventually answer the prayers of the Tribulation Saints who cried out for revenge
- ✓ the wickedness of the earth will be great. God does not always answer prayers right away, but he will not let them go unanswered forever. Neither will he let wicked nations or individuals deny him forever.

Key Symbols:

- ✓ Clusters of Grapes
 - *fruit of the Antichrist (his followers)*
- ✓ Earth's Vine
 - *Antichrist*
- ✓ The Sixth Angel
 - *tells the fourth angel to take his sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes*

What Others are Saying:

David Hocking: All true believers are designed by God to bear the fruit of God's righteousness (Galatians 5:22–23; Philippians 1:9–11). In a similar manner, unbelievers are described as a vine that bears fruit, not the fruit of God's character, but the fruit of wickedness and rebellion. [14-19](#)

Remember This...

- ✓ The souls of the martyred Tribulation Saints under the altar asked, *How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood* (Revelation 6:9, 10)?

Cast Them Out

Revelation 14:19 The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath.

The fourth angel will use his great sickle to gather the wicked nations of the earth. He will then cast them into the *winepress of God's wrath*. This is a symbol to help us understand what is going to happen. When farmers go into their vineyards to harvest the grapes they cast them into the winepress and squeeze the juice out of them. In this process the grapes are practically destroyed. The same thing will happen to the wicked when this angel harvests the earth. They will be like a grape being squashed in a winepress.

What Others are Saying:

J.H. Melton: This is, in reality, a war scene, a gathering of armies, the bringing together of the kings of the earth and of the whole world to the battle of the great day of God Almighty... They are assembled on the battlefield of Megiddo. [14-20](#)

J.R. Church: I believe that Christians will not be forced to endure the wrath of God's judgment. We will be raptured to meet our Lord in the air at some point

prior to the beginning of that dreadful time. ^{14:21}

Remember This...

- ✓ Two reasons why many believe the Church will be raptured before the Tribulation Period are:
 - Jesus will rescue us from **the coming wrath** (1 Thessalonians 1:10).
 - God did not appoint us to **suffer wrath** (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

As High As a Horse's Bridle

Revelation 14:20 They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia.

This is a reference to the **Battle of Armageddon**. The ripe grapes (wicked nations) will be trampled in the winepress of **God's wrath** (Isaiah 34:1-8). People will be crushed by the burning bronze feet of Jesus like small grapes under the weight of a large man.

Since the blood will rise as high as the horses' bridles for approximately 180 miles we know that millions will die. Before it happens, though, God will preach the gospel through the 144,000 Jews, the two witnesses, and his angel (the first angel of Chapter 14). He will also send an angel (the third angel of Chapter 14) to warn those who follow the Antichrist. He will give the world many chances to repent before he destroys it.

Key Point

- ✓ God will give the world many chances to repent before he destroys it.

What Others are Saying:

Hal Lindsey: Apparently this whole valley (**valley of Megiddo, or Armageddon**, see map) will be filled with war materials, animals, bodies of men, and blood. ^{14:22}

David Hocking: God's righteous anger is unleashed against all unbelievers, the nations of the world who have lived in opposition to his purposes and rejected his Messiah. Now, at the end of the **Tribulation**, they will taste his personal wrath. The consequences are awesome. ^{14:23}

Peter and Paul Lalonde: Despite their rebellion, the knee of every person at **Armageddon** shall indeed bow and the tongue of each shall indeed confess that Jesus Christ is Lord! ^{14:24}

Remember This...

- ✓ When John saw Jesus, Christ's feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace (Revelation 1:15).
-

Study Questions

- ✓ What sounds did John hear in heaven and what do they mean?
- ✓ What is significant about "dying in the Lord?"
- ✓ Who will send harvesters to the earth during the **Tribulation Period**, who will do the harvesting, and what will they harvest?
- ✓ What does "trampled in the winepress" imply?

[Go to Answers](#)

Chapter Wrap-up

- ✓ The 144,000 will stand with Jesus on Mount Zion and sing a new song since they will be redeemed from the earth and offered as firstfruits. These are also the ones who kept themselves pure during the **Tribulation**. ([Revelation 14:1-5](#))
- ✓ An angel will fly through the air proclaiming the Gospel to all the earth's inhabitants and warning them that the hour of God's judgment is near. ([Revelation 14:6, 7](#))
- ✓ A second angel will follow the first and proclaim the fall of **Babylon** because she caused the nations of the earth to sin. ([Revelation 14:8](#))
- ✓ A third angel will follow the first two and warn the people of earth to not worship the **Antichrist** or receive his **Mark**. Those who do follow the **Antichrist** will suffer God's fury forever. ([Revelation 14:9-12](#))
- ✓ Two harvests of the earth will occur. The first one will be by Christ and the second by an angel who will throw his harvest into the winepress of God's wrath. ([Revelation 14:14-20](#))

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