

Bristol Conference 1969

by Carl Armerding

Carl Armerding's sermon explores the significance of Abram's encounter with Melchizedek and the importance of remembering the Lord in our lives.

Duration: 42:00

Scripture: Genesis 14, Matthew 10:42, Philippians 3:14

Topics: "Bible Conference"

Description

The sermon transcript discusses the story of Abraham and his victory over the kings who had captured his nephew Lot. It emphasizes the danger of complacency and pride after experiencing a great victory. The speaker encourages the audience to remain vigilant and prepared even in times of success. The sermon also touches on the therapeutic value of observing the Lord's Supper and the importance of helping the poor.

Transcript

Our brother, Dr. Armageen, would you please open God's Word at Genesis chapter 14. Genesis chapter 14. I'm going to take the time to read all of this chapter and the first verse of chapter 15.

Keep it fast in the days of Amrepl, king of Shinar, Eriok, king of Elazar, Keterleomer, king of Elam, and Tidal, king of Nations, that these made war with Beera, king of Sodom, and with Persia, king of Gomorrah, Shinar, king of Admah, Shemeber, king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela, which is Zohar. All these were joined together in the Vale of Sidim, which is the Salt Sea, as which we usually know as the Dead Sea. Twelve years they served Keterleomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled.

And in the fourteenth year came Keterleomer, and the kings were with him, and smote the Reptium in Ashtaroth, Carnaeum, and the Zuthim in Ham, and the Emim in Sheba, Kyriathaeum, and the Horites in their Mount Seir, and El-Paran, which is by the wilderness. They returned and came to Enmishpat, which is Kadish, and smote all the country of the Amlekites, and also the Amorites that dwelt in Hadith on Tamar. Then went out the king of Sodom, and the king of Gomorrah, and the king of Admah, and the king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela, the same as Zohar.

And they joined battle with them in the Vale of Sidim, with Keterleomer, king of Elam, the title king of Nazian, the Damraphel king of Shinar, Ariok king of Alasar, four kings with five. And the Vale of Sidim was full of slime pits, and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled and fell there. And they that remained fled to

the mountains.

And they took all the goodness of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their vittles, and went their way. And they took aloft Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed. And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew, for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, and brother of Eshkol, brother of Aner.

These were confederate, or allies, with Abram. When Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto death. And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobar, which is on the left hand of Damascus.

And he brought back all the goods, but also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people. And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Keterleomer. And the kings were with him at the valley of Sheba, which is the king's dale.

And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine. He was the priest of the Most High God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram, of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth.

And blessed be the Most High God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thine hands. And he gave him tithes of old. And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the curtains, and take the goods to thyself.

And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted up mine hand unto the Lord, the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth. But I will not take from the bread even to a few latches. That I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram great.

Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men that went with me. Aner, Eshkol, and Mamre, let them take their portion. And after these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram.

I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. Just about 24 hours now, the Lord willing, we'll be meeting again in this chapel to remember our Lord. And I thought I would like to offer a few things that you've taught this morning, relevant to that most precious meeting.

Sometimes people, in talking about this distinctive of our particular fellowship, and it is a distinctive, that we remember the Lord from week to week. I'm told, of course, that there are other bodies of Christians that do this also, but I have observed that with them it's more or less of a little supplement to another kind of a service altogether. In other words, it's not that it's a main purpose for which they gather, to remember the Lord Jesus.

Not to hear a sermon, not to have a lot of prayers like a prayer meeting, but to just remember Him. And when you think of the number of hours in a week, 168 of them, surely this is little enough for us to give to Him. And I say this because very recently I was in a meeting at one of our assemblies up north, and a young brother got up and read the 58th chapter of Isaiah, and gave us quite a scolding as to our lack of interest in the social needs and so on of people around us.

And it was all out of keeping with the meeting that we were in. I couldn't help but think of that scene as depicted in the 12th chapter of John, where they made Him a supper, but Judas rudely interrupts and says, why wasn't the money that was spent for this alabaster box of ointment sold for three hundred and

tents and given to the poor? The Lord Jesus says, let her alone, she has brought a good one. She gets the day of my burying, has she done this? And in the gospel according to Mark, he adds these words, he says, the poor you have always with you, and whenever you will you can do them good.

But beloved, this is one of those distinctives that we have. It's very interesting to find in this chapter which we have read this morning, a little foreshadowing of this, and a rather strange context one would never have expected it. Here are four kings and five fighting with each other.

In that part of the world which is yet going to see some of the bloodiest battles that have ever been recorded in history, I'm sure you've been thinking about some of them. As you and I hear these skirmishes from day to day about the Arabs and the Ukrainians fighting across the Suez Canal and on the long Jordan and so on, these are only just little skirmishes preliminary to the great battle that is yet to be fought there. And it may be that this battle of which we've been reading this morning is also a little foreshadowing of this.

But there are two persons involved in this. One is of course Lot, the nephew of Abraham, or Abram as he's called in this chapter, for he has not yet been given that larger name, and his nephew Lot. There were these two men.

Lot, you remember, was given his choice one day when his herdsman and the herdsman of Abram couldn't get on. Abram said, well, choose what you will. You go to the right hand, I'll go to the left, and so on.

And Lot chose him the well-watered plains of Jordan. He took the choice. He didn't say, now, Uncle Abram, you're older than I am, you take your choice.

No, he takes his choice. And what a sad choice it was. And how true is that little quatrain that we quote so frequently? He knows, he loves, he cares, nothing this group can live.

He gives the very best to those who leave the choice with him. And that's exactly what Abram did. But now after this battle, and Lot is taken captive with his family and all of his property as well, somebody comes and tells Abram about this.

Abram is living over there in the plains of Mamre. If you've ever been over there, it's a quiet, remote place. I remember the day we went down to Hebron.

It happened to be on a Friday, which was a great mistake, because the Moslems make a great deal, of course, of Friday in that part of the world. And so they didn't like it very much that we drove down there on a Friday, even though our driver was a Christian Arab and certainly should have known about this. But in any case, he said to us, well, he said, as you can see, we're not welcome here today.

They were jumping up on the running board of the car, and they were shouting things at us which we couldn't understand in Arabic. But we were told afterwards that they were actually threatening our lives. This was in 1938.

So we retreated to the plains of Mamre, where Abram is supposed to have lived, and where the oak trees are still growing, which are supposed to be descendants of the oaks in his day. That doesn't need to shock us here in America, because we have trees growing in California, which were saplings in the days of Abram. So this is nothing unusual.

But here we were recounting some of the scenes in the life of Abram, and this wonderful thing, when one of these who had escaped came and told Abram what had happened. And Abram proves himself a great strategist here when he takes his 318 servants born in his own house. That is, in his establishment.

He must have had quite an establishment of 318 trained servants born in his own house. And he pursued them, and then actually divided his force into three parts, and attacked them by night, and came back victorious. Now it is just at this juncture, beloved, in a time of victory, that the enemy would like to take advantage of that which is so common to our hearts when we've had a wonderful victory.

You know, this is probably the most dangerous time in our lives, when we've had a glorious victory. And I'm saying this, beloved, because we come to a conference like this, and God ministers to our hearts, our souls, and I trust to our consciences. And many of us have come to a conference like this, and we're on the mountain top.

But now the question is, what about it when we go down? When we go back to the places where we live, the places where we work, the places where we're going to have to listen to language which is quite different from what we've been hearing here, and what we've been using here. That's going to be another story, isn't it? And here's where our faith is going to be put to the test. And so we find here is a great test in the life of Abel.

As he comes back from this victory, the king of Sodom, whether this is the same one who fell in the slime pits with the king of Gomorrah, or whether they had already appointed a successor to him, but in any case we read here in verse 17 of our chapter, the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Teter-Leomer, and the king grew with him at the valley of Sheba, which is the king's jail. As I say, it may be a moot question as to whether this was the same king who fell in the slime pits. If he did, he probably didn't have a very good suit on at the moment.

In any case, he very quickly came out with a proposition. But notice how wonderfully broad it remains. And here's one of those answers to the question that's sometimes put to me when I talk with people who do not follow the practice which we have of remembering our blessed Lord every week.

They say, doesn't this thing become commonplace to you? And isn't it likely to become very ordinary when you do it this often? Then I remind them of some of the great spiritual advantages of remembering the Lord every week. You know, there's a great advantage to this. I believe we've got a picture right here in this 14th chapter of Genesis how wonderfully God prepared his servants for what the king of Sodom was going to present to him.

When this mysterious person here called Melchizedek, whose genealogy is omitted in the scriptures, it's not counted, he knows that he might be made light unto the Son of God. This is the way it is put in the 7th chapter of Hebrews. His genealogy was not counted.

He didn't have any genealogy from the priests of the tribe of Levi. And so he's made light unto the Son of God. I remember how one morning in a hotel in Memphis, a maid came in to take care of my room.

And she saw that I was still there. She carried it back away and waited until I vacated. And I said, come right in.

I said, if you don't mind, I'll keep on with my work here. And when I'm in your way, just please tell me and I'll move my chair. So she did.

She picked up the vase, cleaned up the bathroom. Then I noticed that there was no further sound of anything going on. And I wondered whether she had walked out.

I looked around. Here she was standing with her broom and her bucket. I said, is there anything I can do for you? Yes, she says, I see that you are a minister.

You can see this by my Bible lying on the desk. I said, yes, would you like to talk about the Bible? She said, well, she said, yesterday our minister preached us a sermon about Melchizedek. And she says, I'm all in shock.

I don't know who Melchizedek was. Was he Jesus or was he what? Well, I said, now let's see what it says in the book. So we opened up to the 7th chapter of Hebrews.

Would you like to do that? Just a look at the passage that I did with that here whole essay. 7th chapter of Hebrews, where we get the writer of the Hebrews, and I believe it was Paul. Just simply indicates my ignorance.

But anyhow, he says here in chapter 7, For this Melchizedek, king of Pharaoh, priest of the most high God, who met Abram returning from the flood of kings and left him, to whom also Abram gave a tenth part of all, first being by interpretation king of righteousness. That's what the name Melchizedek means. And after that king of Pharaoh, which we take as the Jerusalem of today, which is king of peace, without father, without mother, without descent, or without a genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, a fighter for peace continual.

And here's this girl standing alongside of me, and look at this. And I underlined these words for her, but made like unto the Son of God. I said, do you see this? You know that girl standing there, she said, you can't be made like somebody who you already is.

She had a dream. Melchizedek was a distinct personage, and he was. But, he was a beautiful type of the Lord Jesus, our high priest.

And you know, dear friends, I am really distressed in the way that he puts a little emphasis on this precious truth of the priesthood, the high priesthood of our Lord Jesus. Some years ago, I was in the state of Florida, I'll not mention the naive place, Dr. Barnhouse was ministering at a certain church there, and he took up the seventh chapter of Hebrews, and gave us a wonderful sermon on the high priestly work of the Lord Jesus. I was thrilled with it.

And after this meeting, I met the pastor of the church. He looked at me, and he said, wasn't that a daring thing for Donald to do this afternoon? And I said, what do you mean? Well, he said, what do these people know about the high priesthood of the Lord Jesus? I said, are you the pastor of this church? He said, yes. I said, and how long have you been pastor here? He said, 13 years.

I said, you have been here 13 years, and you have never told these people about the high priestly work of the Lord Jesus. You know, that's a time when you're never ashamed of your gray or your white hairs. I said to him, shame on you.

To be deprived of a thing like this. Beloved, this is something that should be the joy of each one of our hearts. It's a great thing to know the Lord Jesus is our Savior.

It's a great thing to know Him as our Lord and our Master. It's a great thing to know Him as our shepherd who leads us along. But all to think of Him today as the one who is in the presence of God, seated at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, ever living to make intercession for us.

Can you imagine it? Someone who's constantly engaged in making intercession for the likes of you and me. My dear friends, this thing, it overwhelms me when I think about it. That I have one in heaven today who knows all about the experiences of this world, for he was tempted or tried in all points like as we are, apart from sin.

Knows everything about the sorrows of death, what it meant to part with loved ones. He gives evidence of this fact when he reached by the grave of Labrus. He knew what it meant to be hungry.

He knew what it meant to be thirsty. Yes, he knows all about the sorrows of the way. This is one of the purposes that was in the incarnation.

He himself took part of flesh and blood, that he might be able to succor those who were being tempted. Such in height we come about. And here is this type, Melchizedek, coming into the life of Abram, at a very important point.

He doesn't bring forth anything in the way of jewels or money or anything like this. As though he was going to out to soothe the king of Sodom. Because if this man Melchizedek had any idea of what was going to be presented to Abram, he probably would have thought, well maybe I've got to out soothe the king of Sodom.

But no, he didn't out soothe the king of Sodom. He just brought forth these very simple things of bread and wine. That's all.

How simple it is, isn't it? Yes, this only man who has decorated this thing and made it mysterious, created a certain priesthood who can take away from her hands and turn it into the actual body of Christ, and take the cup and turn it into his actual blood, and all this sort of thing, which of course is so foreign to Scripture. And here the Scripture brings forth these two simple elements. But somebody said, wait a minute, Virginia, you don't need to tell me that Abram understood all the significance of this, I don't know.

I don't know, but one thing I do know. That Abram knew a whole lot more than we credited him with sometimes. According to the eighth chapter of John's Gospel, the Lord Jesus said, Abraham rejoiced to see my day.

He saw it and was glad. I'm wondering, as Melchizedek stood there before Abram with the bread and the wine in his hands, whether Abram, with that wonderful vision of faith, could look forward to that day. Because in the 22nd chapter of this same book, you remember he speaks about it, it says, in the mouth of the Lord it shall be seen.

He looks ahead. And so I'm just wondering whether he didn't understand something more than we credited him with. But in any case, beloved, you and I understand today, in the light of the New Testament, what these things stand for.

And I'm using this this morning, dear friends, to show how that which we do from Lord's Day to Lord's Day can be a tremendous blessing to us in our spiritual lives in preserving us from things which might be our ruination. Suppose that the King of Sodom had been able to come right into the presence of Abram with

his proposition, without his fortification. But, you know this, friends, God brings Melchizedek into this form.

I want to suggest two or three things that this did for Abram. Of course, it would be a great refreshing to him. Not only physically, but spiritually.

And I'm sure all of us will agree that this is one of the great benefits that we have on a Lord's Day morning. Is to come together for an hour of worship and praise. Oh, how relaxing it is, isn't it? How refreshing it is.

It must have been that, after coming back out of the heat of battle, and having to use all the strategy of which he was capable in order to bring back Lot and all his group, all his property. But I don't notice that Lot is not in on this particular service. It doesn't say that Melchizedek says, Well, now let's bring Lot into this thing too.

No, he's not in on this. He can't be a part of this. This is for the man of faith.

Now, I'd like you to notice that it says in verse 19 of our chapter, Genesis 14, verse 19, And he blessed and said, Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth. Why should he have to refer to God in that particular way? You know, the Lord Jesus did this just before he made that tremendous offer in the 11th chapter of Matthew that we were looking at a few days ago. When he paused after having pronounced judgment upon those cities where his mighty works were done, he says, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, I thank you.

I thank you. How we need to remember this, dear friends, in a day like this. When man thinks he owns the whole show.

In a few days, he'll be taking off for the moon. But, he's still in full possession. He's the possessor of heaven and earth.

And think of having a blessing from him. Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth. You know, that in itself will prepare him for any proposition that the king of Sodom may make.

I say to myself, what offer could the king of Sodom make that could match this? It reminds me of the offer which Satan made to our Lord Jesus. When he showed him the kingdoms of the world and all the glory of them. You know, there's something ironical about that.

Because when you think of the kingdoms that had already been on the earth, the empire that had existed and fallen before this. And doubt that their representatives were there on top of that mountain. When Satan displayed all these princes of the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them, I think the Lord might have been very sarcastic and said, did you say glory? Where was the glory of Egypt when he said that? Where was the glory of Assyria when he said that? Where was the glory of Babylon when he said that? Where was the glory of Persia and Greece when he said that? And where was the glory of Rome which was in existence at the time he said that? Yes, the Lord could have been very sarcastic.

He said as it's written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Oh, he was a possessor of heaven and earth. Do you think Satan could tempt him? As a matter of fact, he had the promise, as you know, from the second chapter, the second of the Psalms, where God said to his blessed son, ask of me, and I'll give you the heathens that I'm inheriting from the othermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

I know that verse is sometimes used in missionary meetings, but we have no right to that. That was made a promise made to the Son of God. And the next verse shows that it's not a missionary text, because he says, thou shalt break them over a rod of iron, and thou shalt catch them and keep them as a part of his vessel.

That's not a missionary verse. This is the day when the Lord Jesus is going to take possession. And here is his representative saying to Abram, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth.

Oh, I can almost hear Abram saying, and certainly thinking it in part, is that so? Nobody can tempt me with anything. Whether he knew about the proposition that was coming from the king of Sodom or not, we don't know at the moment here. But let's move on.

Verse 20. This is also a worship meeting. Notice this.

And he blessed the most high God. And when you bless God, you worship him. Yeah, this is it.

And you know, friends, a lot of people, if they're asked for definitions of worship, they really don't know what it means. I heard a definition of worship some years ago, which I've never forgotten, and which I think is most satisfactory. I haven't seen it in the dictionaries, but it satisfies me.

That worship is the overflow of a heart that has no request to make. Worship is the overflow of a heart that has no request to make. He blessed.

Blessed be the most high God who shall deliver thine enemies. Notice how these kings are here identified as the enemies of Abraham. He started to deliver them into his hands, and now he turns around and does something else that we like to do at our morning meetings.

He gives him an offering. And mind you, fellows, this is long before the days of the law. Abraham didn't live under the law of Moses, but he was a tither.

He gave him flies to eat. See how these things here are foreshadowed for us in our morning meetings. Coming together, remember the Lord of these simple emblems, the bread that speaks of his body, the cups that speak of his precious blood shed for our sins, the outpouring of our hearts in worship and praise for him, and then the offering.

He gave him flies that will... Remember my dear old father telling about one Monday morning, he was coming down the streets of Winslow, Arizona, where he spent the last years of his life with my sister, who was a missionary there among the Indians, and he met a very sour-faced man who was trying to be a Christian. And my father looked at him. Dad was a happy Christian.

And he looked at him and he said, Well, what's the matter with you, brother? You don't look very happy. I don't think that. I went to church yesterday, and I'm in it to preach a sermon on tithing.

What do you think? Do you want me to give a ten? Dad said, Don't let him hold you down like that. You give him two tens. Dad was a double tither all his life.

That is, after he became the noble Lord. This was his way of expressing his appreciation. He came from a country where he had been under the heel of a military regime, came over here to America and enjoyed the freedom of the country, but all above all the blessed freedom of knowing the Lord Jesus Christ as his

Savior.

Dad never felt he could ever give enough in appreciation for this. Now, now we're ready for the proposition from the King of Sodom. Verse 21.

And the King of Sodom said, I wonder if he was a spectator of all this. Maybe. He said to Abram, Give me the persons or the souls.

You get that? If this King of Sodom is what I think he is, I think he represents that law of sin of which my beloved colleague was speaking a few days ago. And you know, sin is presented in its regal character there in that text of Romans when it says, Let not sin therefore raise. Yes, the King of Sodom may well be an illustration of that.

And he's interested in souls. And then notice the awful insult to Abram in the next verse, next phrase. And take the goods to thyself.

You're nothing but a materialist. Is that the way they size us up? Was this true in the case of Abram? Let's go back to the 12th chapter and we'll find he's a man who's anything but a materialist. When he leaves behind his country and his kindred and everything, to go out in stupor, faith, and not knowing whether it works.

As we read in the 11th chapter of Hebrews. Do you yet hear this awful insinuation? Take the goods to thyself. But I believe Elamite has a word for us in this materialistic age in which we live.

God forbid that any of us should ever leave the impression in this world that we are materialists. That's what the world has done. They want things.

They want to enjoy things now. But God has given us a new set of things altogether. What things were gained through Jesus Paul and Philippians 3? Those I counted lost.

Yes, I counted them but few, for I see. And now he says, I press forth a mark for those things which are ahead. A brand new set of things.

Yes, we got things, but how different they are. Take the goods to thyself. But he's been all prepared for this.

And this brings me, beloved, to the few things I wanted to say about this thing this morning. Someone referred to this as the therapeutic value of a proper observance of the Lord's Supper. The therapeutic value.

The health-giving preventive power. Oh, you can see, beloved, how if we're in a proper state of soul when we come to do this, what a wonderful preventative it can be. Yes, if you pardon me referring back again to my boyhood days, I was just as a lad, 11, 12 years of age, attending a little Presbyterian church next door to where we lived.

They celebrated the Lord's Supper once a quarter. But on the Friday night before, they had what they called a preparatory service. They got ready for that great event.

I think they would put some of us to shame. It is said of the great Gretton Guinness whose daughter I knew very well, Mrs. Howard Taylor, she told me that her father would simply isolate himself in his study

on Saturday night, he did without supper, in order that he might prepare himself for the Lord's Day. Oh, the therapeutic value of the proper observance of the Lord's Supper.

It enabled him to say, nothing do it. I've already taken my oath, I've lifted up my hand to the Most High God, to the Bethel of heaven and earth, that I'll not take anything from a bread, even to a shoelace, nothing that's yours, lest thou should say, I've made a regret. And notice how God honors this decision there in chapter 15.

Oh, before I speak of that, let me show you, just in a moment or two, how considerate this man Abram is in this last verse of chapter 14 of those who weren't with him. You notice he doesn't expect them to come up to this level. Let us be gracious enough to say, well, if they haven't reached this point, let them take their portion.

And no doubt these were honorable men, Ziner, Eshcol, and Mamre. These allies of Abram, but he said, let them take their portion. He's not deciding things for them.

This is a personal decision between him and the Lord. But then comes chapter 15, and the man gets his eyes open and has a vision, and he hears a voice that puts a seal of approval on that wonderful decision he made. Fear not, Abram.

I am thy shield, and God has proved that by sending Melchizedek out there with that bread and wine. I am thy shield. Not only protection, but I am thy exceeding great reward.

Oh, beloved, I know we're looking forward to a day when the Lord is going to say, well done, thou good and faithful servant. And no one's work will be passed over like a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple, telling no wise man this reward. But the greatest reward of all, be the Lord himself.

This is what Paul meant in Philippians 3. He says, thy may win Christ. Shall we turn to hymn number 167? Hymn number 167. I journey through a desert, drear and vile.

It is my heart by such sweet thoughts, beguiled of him on whom I lean. My strength, my faith, I can forget the sorrows of the way. So on number 167.

Blessed Lord Jesus, we thank thee for making thyself so precious to us. Lord, we stand here before thee this morning to confess to thee our unworthiness with such grace. But how wonderful to have as our beloved, God's own beloved, that he should share thee with us, calling us into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

O precious Savior, we pray that as each one of us goes home from this conference, we may indeed go with such sweet thoughts beguiled. We trust thee, Lord, to continue to bless us as we move on into the closing hours of this conference. Bless those who have already left us and are on their way home.

Grant them safe journeys to their dwelling places, we pray. And again, lifting our hearts to thee for those who are bereaved and those who are lying on hospital beds, particularly remembering our dear sister, Mrs. Fish. So we commit all these into thy hands and ourselves now, Father.

In the precious name of the Lord Jesus, Amen.

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