

The Secret Rapture: Is It Scriptural?

by Stephen Hamilton

The sermon discusses the second coming of Jesus Christ and argues that the secret rapture theory is not supported by the Bible.

Duration: 37:56

Scripture: Isaiah 8:20, Matthew 24:37, Matthew 24:40, Luke 17:34, 1 Thessalonians 4:16

Topics: "Secret Rapture"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the topic of the second coming of Jesus and the various views and opinions surrounding it. He emphasizes the importance of not being deceived by false teachings and urges listeners to examine teachings to ensure they align with biblical principles. The preacher also mentions the different gospels mentioned in the Schofield reference Bible and criticizes the idea of a divided second coming into two stages. He concludes by stating that such a concept can only be known if taught by man, not by clear scripture.

Transcript

The exaltation of our Lord is his second advent and that is what Matthew chapter 24 deals with. You will notice in verse 3 that as he sat upon the Mount of Olives the disciples came unto him privately saying tell us when shall these things be and what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world. All very interesting questions.

I think it's worthy of note that the disciples wanted to know all about the coming of the Lord before he'd ever gone to the cross. They were preoccupied in a sense with that whole thing. We notice that that was something that was on their minds again after the Lord ascended into heaven.

Because in the first chapter of the book of Acts, Acts chapter 1 and verse 6 just before the Lord ascended up into glory, this is after his death and his resurrection, it says when they therefore were come together they asked of him saying Lord wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel. They were preoccupied with the subject of the kingdom. And he said, verse 7, and this is a verse that many preachers could take to heart and many Christians, it is not for you to know.

Now we need to think about that. It is not for you to know. The times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power.

Now we are such curious creatures that we don't like to be in a position where we don't. We like to think even if we don't know things that we do know. But the Lord makes it clear that there are certain things that are hidden from the people of God.

They are known only to him and so they are being left there. But ye shall have power after the Holy Ghost has come upon you and so on. Then it says in verse number 9 of Acts 1 that when he had spoken these things while they beheld he was taken up and a cloud received him out of their sight and while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up behold two men stood by them in white apparel which also said ye men of Galilee why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in the same manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

In other words get on with the work that the Lord has given you to do because in due time in God's time this very same Jesus who has ascended up to heaven is going to come again. Now let's go back to Matthew 24. The questions were asked when shall these things be? What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world? And verse 4 is again a verse that we should take very much to heart because it is in the context of the subject of the second coming that Jesus says take heed that no man deceive you.

It is a plain fact that there are as many views on the subject of future things as there are noses in the world. Everybody's got one. There are all kinds of opinions out there.

Some really way out in left field as you would say here opinions. Others that seem to be more orthodox and more correct and yet sometimes we would need to examine even those teachings to see if they are biblical. Take heed that no man deceive you.

It doesn't matter whether he's a good man. It doesn't matter whether he's a scriptural preacher but he says take heed that no man deceive you. Do not be man centered in your views of these things.

And then the Lord speaks in detail about certain things that will happen prior to his coming. Then he brings it to a close here down in verse number 27. Let's read from verse 27.

For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together, immediately after the tribulation of those days. Shall the sun be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other.

Now there are a number of proofs right on the surface of verse 30 about the coming of Christ the second time. And the first of them is Christ is coming again. That's what the Bible teaches.

Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming. So Christ is coming again. That's clear.

Secondly, Christ is coming again visibly. They asked him in verse 3, what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world? They asked Jesus about his second coming. He gives them the answer.

And he says in verse 30, and they shall see the Son of Man coming. So he's coming again visibly. Thirdly, Christ is coming again powerfully.

Because verse 30 says he will be coming in the clouds of heaven with power. And fourthly, he is coming again gloriously. Because it will be with great glory.

Now let me say that the second advent is a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith. All true believers, and I mean all true believers, rejoice in and look forward to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. They look forward to the appearing of their Lord and Savior.

However, and this is where we get into controversy. In fact, in my country, there's controversy as to whether the word controversy should be pronounced controversy. Because sometimes it's pronounced controversy.

So, you know, even when there's a controversy, you can't even get to a conclusion as to whether it's controversy or controversy. Well, whichever it is, we are definitely on controversial ground. Because not all believers agree as to the details of the second advent.

And that is something that we must face. Now, I have my views, but you have your views. But what we want to do is not just present, you know, somebody's view of what the second coming is that's just as valid as every other view.

We want to try, with the Lord's help, and I know that all preachers will say this. And they maybe are coming from different directions. But we want to try to strip away all the preconceived ideas, all the notions that we may be bringing to this subject.

And actually look at what the Bible is. I knew of a preacher back in my home country, Northern Ireland, who preached vigorously, strongly, the teaching that is known as the pre-tribulational secret rapture of the church. And one day, while he was preaching, he was reading Matthew chapter 24 and verse 29.

And those words jumped right out of the page at him. Where it says, and I quote, Immediately after the tribulation of those days, and by his own admission the preacher nearly fell over. Because he had preached all his ministry, that Christ was coming before the tribulation.

And now he's reading right here in the Bible, immediately after, after now, not before, after the tribulation of those days, shall the sun be darkened, and so on, and so on, and so on. Not all believers agree as to the details of the second advent. There are preachers, there are people who have changed their views, several times even, during the course of a ministry.

I think of Arthur W. Pink, who at one time was what is known as pre-millennial. He then took up a post-millennial position, and I think he finally ended up with amillennialism. And so you can see that this is controversial ground, this is a subject upon which there are a lot of different views.

And I would venture to say this morning that probably most of you will have been taught during your late time, the teaching that is known as the pre-tribulational secret rapture of the church. My parents are here today. When my folks were first saved, they joined a church which taught that doctrine.

And I remember, even as a very young child, that they had a very gracious view to that view. In fact, one of our very well respected ministers, a senior pastor in our church, had a very heated debate on the

subject with my father. I remember very well my mum's Schofield reference Bible, which he was recommended.

Now, I have to say something about the Schofield Bible, because it's relevant to this issue. What is the Schofield Bible? Well, first of all, way back in the early part of this century, there were a group of students, a group of Bible students, one of whom was called Cyrus Inger Schofield, the other was called Gaveline, and so on and so on. All listed their names in the credits in the front of the Schofield reference Bible.

Now, what Mr. Schofield did was to take the bulk of the notes of a man by the name of William Kelly. And instead of Kelly's volumes gathering dust on someone's library shelves, Schofield took the bulk of his notes and incorporated those notes into the text of the Word of God. So that the King James Version, the Authorised Version, was produced with Mr. Schofield's notes interspersed between the text of Scripture.

Now, you say, well what's wrong with that? Well, I'll tell you what I find wrong with that, and objectionable about that. It is that unconsciously, unconsciously in many cases, people by having a Schofield reference Bible have read not just the text of Scripture, but his notes upon Scripture, and have thought in their own minds that what they read was not Mr. Schofield's notes, but were the teachings of Scripture. Now, any man, however good, is fallible.

This book, the Bible, is an infallible book. And so when you incorporate anybody's notes into the text of Scripture, you are introducing a great danger. And that is of elevating the ideas of a man onto the same plane as the Word of God.

You say, well how does that happen? All over America today, there will be preachers who will stand up in the pulpit, and in turn to Matthew Chapter 24, they will say, turn to page such and such in your Schofield reference Bible. And in fact, they'll go further, for I've heard preachers say that if you're not using a Schofield reference Bible, you are ploughing with a dull plough. And so there is this unconscious elevating of the notes of Mr. Schofield onto the same level as the Word of God.

Now, I don't want to get into this whole subject of Schofield's Bible today. There are many, many, many of his notes which include wholesome, sound doctrine. But I'm afraid that there are many, many others of his notes that are unsound.

For instance, his whole view of the Gospel is unsound. He teaches in at least one place in the Schofield reference Bible that there are four different Gospels at different periods of time. The Gospel of the Kingdom, which is not the same Gospel that we're preaching today, we're told.

The Gospel of the Grace of God. There's even one called the Everlasting Gospel, which is not everlasting, because it's preached by an angel, and it only is preached for seven years. Now, I have to say to you, and I don't mean this in a way which could be taken as being offensive or trying to get one over on anyone, but I'm just saying this because I feel it passionately in my heart.

That is heresy. It's heresy. God has one covenant of grace.

The covenant of grace in the Bible, since the days of our first parents, has been seen developed in a progressive form. The covenant of grace is one covenant, however. And those in the Old Testament, those in the New Testament are saved, will be saved exactly the same way.

And that is by faith. By faith. In fact, Galatians, as an epistle, deals with this whole subject and talks about Abraham having the Gospel preached unto him in his day.

But let's just say this. Forget about what Mr. Schofield has taught. Forget about what some other mighty man have taught on the subject of the Second Coming.

Let's look at the text of Scripture. As I've said, I would say probably most Christians, I'm guessing that, but most Christians in the evangelical world believe in the Second Coming of Christ which is pre-tribulation and secret and it is what is known as the two-stage coming again of Christ. Now, just because this teaching is widespread, just because many believe it, does not, like any other teaching, mean that it is necessarily true.

And just because you have been taught it, as in my lifetime in early days I would have been taught it, doesn't mean that it is true. There are some outstanding scholars and preachers, some fine Christians, many fine Christians, who have and who still do believe that when Jesus comes again, he is coming before a great tribulation period to, and the word that is used is rapture, or snatch away his church from the world. He will be gone for seven years, according to this teaching, then he is going to return after that period of tribulation to establish his throne upon the earth.

Now I have to say to you that this any moment secret rapture teaching is a theory. It is a theory. And this theory of the any moment secret rapture of the church was not taught until the year 1830 by a man in England by the name of John Nelson Darby.

J. N. Darby was one of the founders of what became known as the Plymouth Brethren. This is where this teaching originated. I remember speaking to a very dear man in the city of Edinburgh, preaching with him in the open air, his name was David Cummings, an oddly man, he belonged to a gospel hall in the town there, and he was very strong on this teaching.

And I kept thinking to myself, when is he going to ask me what I believe about the second coming? And sure enough, one Saturday night he asked me, what do you believe about the second coming? So I thought, OK, hobnail boots on, get ready to tramp on some corns here, or bunions, or whatever he had on his feet. I said, David brother, I don't want to offend you, but I don't share the same view as yourself in regard to the second coming of Jesus. He was aghast, of course.

He thought that all Christians should believe this. And I said, you know David, this teaching of the pre-millennial, pre-tribulational, secret, any moment rapture of the church, did not come to the fore in the church of Jesus Christ until the year 1830. And you know, to my amazement, he agreed.

He agreed with me. He says you're absolutely right. And he went further.

He went to Matthew 25 and to verse 6. And I'm telling you, if I could have been knocked over with a feather, I would have fallen to the earth that day. He said, it says in Scripture, And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him. And he said, do you know what that was? That was 1830.

With John Nelson Darby, of the rapture of the Lord Jesus coming in two stages. And I almost fell to the ground. I couldn't believe the man was saying this.

But my interest is not, what did John Nelson Darby teach? My interest is, what did the bridegroom teach? That is my only interest on any subject. And certainly it is true of this particular subject. And I'm laying my cards on the table right away.

And I'm saying to you, I do not believe that the Bible teaches a secret, any moment, pre-tribulational, pre-millennial rapture of the church from the earth. I do not believe that. And I'm going to show you why I don't believe it.

And again, I'm not meaning to be offensive. If you find this offensive, then that's something that you will have to deal with before the Lord. I don't mean to be offensive.

But I'm teaching from the Bible what I believe to be the truth of God. And as I say, we don't come to the word with all kinds of preconceived ideas. Let's have a completely open mind to what God would teach us.

Let me say first of all, that this doctrine, this teaching, of the secret, any moment rapture of the church is nowhere clearly stated in Scripture. Now, this is a principle we must exercise everywhere. Isaiah chapter 8, verse 20.

Isaiah chapter 8, verse 20. To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, that's the Bible, it is because there is no light in them. So, every fundamental doctrine of the faith should therefore be taught clearly in the word of God.

And that is true of every major doctrine that you can think of. It is clearly to be established just by quoting various texts of Scripture. Without any human comment.

And I emphasize that. Without any human comment. You can find in the Bible clearly stated, for instance, the doctrine of the deity of Christ.

The Bible clearly states it. That Jesus Christ is God. There are many, many Scriptures that I could quote to you that are not true.

There is one big question in the Bible, this teaching that Jesus Christ is God. What about the doctrine of the virgin birth? It can be clearly established just by quoting Scripture. I shall call His name Emmanuel, which is being interpreted as God with us.

Justification by faith alone. It can be clearly established just by quoting Scripture. Quoting in the book of Romans, that it is by faith without works that we are saved.

The doctrine of vicarious atonement. That Christ died for our sins. That He shed His blood for His people.

It can be clearly established from the pages of Scripture. And, let me say, the doctrine of Christ's second coming is clearly stated. In fact, I think it is one in every 25 verses in the New Testament about the second coming of Jesus.

That is not in question. We are not questioning whether Jesus is coming again. There is no question about that.

Jesus is coming again. But nowhere, nowhere I say, do we clearly read of a second coming of Jesus divided into two stages, nor do we read of a secret removal of the church before a time of tribulation. Now, I have heard preachers and people have argued with me and said, Ah, but wouldn't, doesn't the Bible say

that Christ is coming to the air and it talks about Him coming to the earth and aren't those two different occasions? No, they're not.

That's the simple answer to that. No, they're not. End of the question.

Oh, but then, doesn't the Bible say two shall be in the field, one shall be taken and the other left? That's right, it does. But who is the one who is taken? Well, we're going to get to that eventually. But it's very clear, and I remember when I first saw this, what a change it brought about in my mind when I saw there in the scripture when the Lord Jesus said that two should be grinding at the mill.

The one would be taken and the other left. Two would be in the field, the one shall be taken and the other left. What is the context of that? As it was in the days of Noah, they knew not until the flood came and took them all away.

Who were the ones that were taken? The ungodly. Exactly the opposite to what people teach. I'll let you into a little secret.

I used to work in a Christian office where we distributed films. And one of the films that we distributed, Enlightened Life films, was called A Thief in the Night. And in the trailers of that film, these verses were quoted.

Two shall be in the field, the one shall be taken and the other left. And everybody assumed that Jesus was talking about the believer being taken away and the unbeliever being left. But if you look at the scripture, it's exactly the opposite.

Exactly the opposite is the case. So nowhere do we read clearly, I say, of a second coming divided into two stages. And I say this, you could only know of such a thing if some man taught it to you.

I must emphasize that. You could only know of such a thing if some man taught it to you. Either you read it in the Schofield Reference Bible or the Charles Ryrie Study Bible or some preacher who believed these things taught it to you.

I don't believe that you would ever go through the scripture and come up with the doctrine of the pre-tribulational rapture of the church. You wouldn't find it. The Lord Jesus warned us about men and their teachings in Matthew 24 verse 4. And I have to say, also by way of like a preface here and our time is moving on, even the leading advocates of this theory admit that it is not clearly outlined and expounded by the scriptures.

I have friends who are in the Brethren movement and even they admit that this is not clearly outlined in scripture. You can't really quote a verse and establish this doctrine fully. And that should be enough right away to make us wary, I say.

It is nowhere stated in scripture. Secondly, there are none of the texts that are used by its teachers which support the theory. In fact, I have to tell you those very texts that are often quoted in its defense destroy the doctrine.

Let's look at one of them. 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. One commentator said from talking here about anything secret, this is the loudest chapter in the Bible. Let's come to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. He is talking about the second coming.

Verse 16. For the Lord himself, just like the angel said in Acts chapter 1, this same Jesus, the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a spirit. Nothing secret there.

With the voice of the archangel. There is nothing secret about that. And with the trumpet of God.

If you know anything about orchestration, you know that the trumpet is one of the loudest instruments in the orchestra. And the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain. And incidentally, let me scotch this idea that Paul thought he was going to be alive when Jesus came.

That is absolute nonsense. There is no evidence for that in scripture. When Paul uses that collective we, he is referring to the people of God in general.

Then we which are alive and remain. Or those of us who are alive and remain. Shall be caught up together with them in the clouds into heaven.

No, it doesn't say that. It doesn't say that. It says shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

And so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore come to one another with these words. Now let's not reduce anything into the text.

Let us look at the text as it is. Let me ask first of all, where is the secrecy here? Where do we have this idea? Where is it introduced in scripture? That this shout is something that only Christians hear. Where do we find that in the Bible I say? The word shout is actually a military term.

Luther says this is a war cry. The commentator Lange calls it a summons to battle. The commentators Coney Beer and Housen translate this as a shout of war.

Now, if this is a battle shout. If this is a cry of a general in war. The Lord descending with a shout.

Why would that general be taking his troops away from the scene of battle? What's the answer to that? How could there be a secret shout of victory? And a silent trumpet blast. I've never heard a trumpet in my life that was silent. I think it is foolish to teach this.

And you will notice verse 17. Teachers of the pre-tribulational rapture of the church say that we go up and out of the world. But look at the verse.

Where does it mention going out of the world? Where does it mention going away? Now, I studied Greek in college quite a while ago now. But I do know that the Greek here is very clear. The word for meet here in verse number 17.

To meet the Lord. It's the Greek word. Or words.

And it is used throughout the New Testament. And if we compare the usage of this term. We will see the meaning of 1 Thessalonians 4. Because the Bible says that we establish the meaning of anything by comparing scripture with scripture.

So let's go to Matthew 25. And we must very quick here. The clock is beating us.

We will return to it of course. Matthew 25 verse 1. Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And then verse 6. Behold the

bridegroom cometh.

Go ye out to meet him. It's Aes Apontazion in both cases. Now what does it mean? Well look at it.

They went forth to meet the bridegroom. Go ye out to meet him. But do you know what they did? They brought him back with them.

They went out to meet him. And they came back with him to go into the marriage. That's what they did.

Again if you go to Acts chapter 28. And verse 15. The word meet is used.

Aes Apontazion again. Acts 28 verse 15. And from thence when the brethren heard of us they came to meet us as far as Apiphorum.

In Rome of course. And the three taverns. Whom when Paul saw he thanked God and took courage.

Look at verse 16. And when we came to Rome. They came out of Rome to meet Paul.

And then when they met him they brought him back with them to Rome. So there wasn't this going away somewhere else. They were meeting Paul and then they accompanied him back to Rome from whence they had come.

And that is the sense of 1 Thessalonians 4.17. The believers are caught up to meet Christ. And straight away they come to earth with him. There is no thought of Christ turning back to go back to heaven.

It's not in the scripture. It's not in the text. It's not there.

Now people will say well hold on a minute. Let's go to Revelation 3 verse 10. Ok.

Let's go to Revelation 3 verse 10. What does it say? First of all it is written. Verse 7. To the church in Philadelphia.

Not Pennsylvania. But over there in the east. The church of Philadelphia.

Right. So here is the sixth church in order that is written to. There are some people who take the view that these seven churches represent certain ages of time.

Well there may be something in that but I think that has been taken way too far in people's minds. We need not to forget these were actual letters written to actual churches in actual places. And the things that were written were first of all applicable to them.

They may have a secondary application. But let us never think that this is written somehow not to the church in Philadelphia. Look at verse 10.

Because thou hast kept the word of my patience. This is written to Philadelphia. I also will keep thee from the awe of temptation which shall come upon all the world.

And that dwell upon the earth. And I've heard men preach on this text and say that this is talking about the pre-millennial pre-tribulation rapture of the church. Well let me say first of all this first application of the verse is to Philadelphia.

And I don't find that they were ever raptured out of the world. I don't find that at all. But furthermore there is no removal talked about here at all.

I will keep thee from. The Greek here is the same as in John 17 verse 15. What did Jesus say there? I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world.

But that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. How does God keep us from evil? Does he take us away out of it? No. He keeps us in the world.

But we are not of the world. The same could be said of Jeremiah 30 verse 7. Where there is no removal of the Jewish people intended at all. It says alas for that day is great.

So that none is like it. It is even the time of Jacob's trouble. But he shall be saved out of it.

I've never heard any teacher yet from the Brethren or anywhere else. Teach that the Jews will be raptured out of tribulation. It's not talking about removal.

It's talking about being kept in and through and being brought out the other side victorious. But of course the strongest pillar of the premillennial pre-tribulation rapture theory. Is 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 7. Now we're not going to be able to fully deal with this at the moment.

But I want to mention it before we finish. And I want you to think about it. And I want you to study it and mull it over in your mind.

What is being said here? 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 7. He's talking about the coming of the Lord Jesus. Verse 1 tells us that. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work.

Only he who now letteth will let until he be taken out of the way. Okay. Now what is taught? People say right away.

This is teaching the removal of the Holy Ghost from the earth. That's what is said. And that is what is assumed right away.

He who letteth will let until he. And the assumption is that the same he is being talked about in both parts of the verse. But my contention is that the he of the first part is not the he of the second part.

Only he who now hindereth or letteth will hinder or let until he. A different he. Be now taken out of the way.

I have to say that there are those who teach the removal of the Holy Ghost from the earth. And they will tell us that since the Holy Ghost dwells in believers. The church must then be removed.

Because if the Holy Ghost is removed from the earth. Then the church must be removed. Hence you have a pre-tribulation rapture.

It sounds plausible. But is it correct? Is it correct? Well first the Holy Spirit is not limited to the bodies of believers. That's the first thing.

The Holy Ghost is omnipresent. It's a foolish doctrine to teach that the Holy Ghost only dwells in believers. He doesn't.

The Holy Ghost is omnipresent. Furthermore the spirit of God was on the earth before ever a man was on the earth. Genesis 1 verse 2. The spirit of God began to brood.

It means. He began to move upon the face of the waters. The spirit of God was on the earth before there was ever a man on the earth.

Secondly. In 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 7. Removal is not spoken of in the text at all. But to the contrary.

It speaks of something coming into being. And here we must finish. Because in the Greek.

The words are literally until he be out of the midst. Or until he. Something be up from the midst.

The word taken. That's in 2 Thessalonians 2 verse 7. Has no corresponding word in the Greek text. It's not in the original.

I've studied it. The words until he be. He be are one Greek word.

Which denotes origin. Or coming into being. So that he does not refer in the second instance to the Holy Spirit at all.

But to the full and unhindered manifestation. Of Antichrist. We're going to return to this next Lord's Day.

We want to take it slowly. We want to take it easy. We want to look at what God actually says.

In his word. And I trust that the Lord will bless us. And that the Lord will help us in our study.

And that we will come to it. With a teachable spirit. That we will come to it.

With the thought. That if what I have been taught or believed up to this point. Is wrong.

And I'm not yet convinced that it is wrong. But I'm willing to see what. Attitude that you have the Lord will bless you.

I'm not here to try to. Put you into my mold. I'm not here to try to pressurize you into believing something that you don't believe.

But I sincerely want us all to believe what the Bible says. And not what men say the Bible says. There's a great difference.

There's a very great difference. So we will come back to this in due course. As the Lord would help us.

Let's all pray. Father. We pray for thy help in the ongoing study.

Of the word of God. Oh God it is our attitude today. Teach me thy way oh Lord.

Teach me. Thy way. We pray in Jesus name.

Amen. Amen.

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