

THE GLORIES OF CHRIST IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

by

Max I. Reich, D. D.

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BOOK ONE

THE PERSONAL GLORY OF CHRIST

CHAPTER ONE

THE ETERNAL SON OF GOD

Hebrews 1:1-14

“Unto the Son he [God the Father] saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever” (Hebrews 1:8; cf. Psalm 45:6).

The Scriptures testify of One whom Christians confess as Lord. Even the Books known as the Old Testament, mirror-like, reflect His glory when they are beheld with **“open face.”** There are certain parts of the Word of God which seem like a constellation of stars of first magnitude. This is true of the opening chapter of the fourth Gospel, the first chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians, and particularly the Epistle to the Hebrews.

At the very beginning of this epistle we are brought into a light which is above the brightness of the noonday sun; it blinds the eye with its splendor. No wonder the name of the author is hidden from view. Moses experienced this brightness when the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle on the day of its dedication and, therefore, he was excluded from the sanctuary he had reared (Exodus 40:35). It was an indication that the Mosaic order would one day be eclipsed by the brighter glory, the glory of which it was but a shadow and sign.

“God . . . hath . . . spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:1-3).

In the Greek language, the thought expressed is that in His person the Son is essentially the brightness, or effulgence, of the glory of God. What this wonderful Being is in Himself is the ground of the infinite worth of all that He became and did.

Back of the acquired and official glories of the Christ is His personal glory as the Son, not only as the Creator and Upholder of the universe, but as the very effulgence of the glory of the Godhead in absolute and timeless existence.

He never *became* this as in verse 4, where, in reference to His humanity, the Greek word meaning “*being made*” or “*having become*” is used. He became flesh (John 1:14), but He always was the outshining of the Godhead’s majesty in His essential being, and that before His incarnation. So the writer of the fourth Gospel, who also hides his identity in the presence of the incarnate Word, speaks of His glory as the only begotten Son who is (subsists) in the bosom of the Father. As such, the Gospel writer has declared Him in His incarnation (John 1:14, 18), using in the Greek the word signifying that He, and none other, could tell out the bosom secrets of God.

Truly we are in the presence of a glory which our finite capacity cannot be expected to grasp. But we can behold what is beyond our comprehension; we can worship. Silence, when face to face with the overwhelming majesty of the inscrutable, may be more fitting than words.

Before we can rightly appreciate what our Lord became, we must hold fast in our souls what He is in His essential being. This is where Arius, an early church dignitary, erred so grievously. The gap between infinite God and finite man was left unbridged by reducing our Lord to a limited being, higher than man but still less than God. Before the soul’s vision was projected a demigod, which would have paganized the Church’s concept of her Lord. God is essentially Father and Son, even as the sun in the sky does not exist without its outshining light. The sunlight is of the same nature as that of the sun. The two are absolutely one and the same. So is the oneness of the Father and the Son. The one is inconceivable without the other.

It is to be noted that the Church started with Christ as the object of divine adoration. She did not arrive at this lofty view of Christ when the apostles were no longer present to watch over her, and when Greek theological speculations had overlaid the original simplicity of her faith. So James, in what may be the earliest New Testament document, names himself a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom he calls the Lord of glory (James 1:1; 2:1).

No man can serve two masters. To a monotheistic Jew like James it was not incompatible to unite the name of his Lord; with that of God as the object of service. From the very beginning believers knew that in Him the invisible God had broken forth into visibility in the form of human life.

Thus it was that the dying Stephen breathed the usual language of an Israelite departing this life,

“Into thy hand I commend my spirit: Thou hast redeemed me, O Jehovah, thou God of truth” (Psalm 31:5).

Stephen, testifying that Jesus is Lord, addressed this prayer to Christ, adapting it in these words,

“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59).

As has often been pointed out, the first heresies which the early Church had to combat were not those which dimmed the Godhead glory of Christ, but those which cast doubt on the reality of His manhood when here in humiliation. John's Gospel and his epistles were written to check this dangerous denial of the incarnation—that the all-creating Word had actually become flesh—and to show that the denial of the fact that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh originated in the “**spirit of antichrist**” (John 1:14; I John 4:2, 3). So we will hold fast the ancient confession of our Lord's absolute deity and true humanity—“very God of very God, and very man of very man.”

“Immanuel . . . God With Us”

The entire Epistle to the Hebrews emphasizes this all-important, twofold truth that Jesus was “**Immanuel . . . God with us**”; and the two opening chapters are devoted entirely to this subject. *Chapter 1 speaks of His deity; chapter 2, of His humanity.* They are the foundation pillars upon which the whole superstructure of the epistle rests. As the eternal, virgin-born Son of God, He lived without sin, wrought miracles, offered Himself the just for the unjust and rose from the dead. As the perfect Son of Man, He became our sympathetic Saviour; indeed, He had to become man in order to die. And as the God-Man He is our Great High Priest.

This is the message of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In it we behold the personal glory of the eternal Son of God shining forth in the moral glory of the perfect Son of Man, whose official glories are seen in the work He came to do, and will continue to do, throughout the endless ages for His redeemed children.

The Occasion for the Epistle

The Hebrew Christians, to whom the epistle was addressed, were suffering bitter persecution from the Christ-rejecting Jews; and were, therefore, in danger of returning to Judaism (See 10:26-39; 12:3-17; 13:3, 13; cf. 2:1-4; 5:11-6:20; 12:25-29).

Because the Temple in Jerusalem had not been destroyed when the epistle was written, the priests who rejected Christ still continued the Levitical sacrifices, as 10:11 plainly states:

“And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.”

The same thought of a continuing ritual at that time is expressed in 13:10, 11. In A. D. 70 all this outward form of Levitical worship was swept away, for the Temple was destroyed; but before that event it was particularly difficult for the Hebrew Christian to endure suffering at the hands of his fellow countrymen, who accused him of being disloyal to Moses and the nation of Israel.

Therefore, the Epistle to the Hebrews was written for a threefold purpose:

1. To prove that Christ is superior to Judaism
2. To warn against apostasy
3. To encourage the fainthearted to “go on” with Christ

The “Chief Point” of the Epistle

The Levitical worship centered around the priesthood, of which the high priest was the chief personage. Moreover, Aaron was Israel’s first and, in a sense, greatest high priest. To prove that Christ is superior to the very best that Judaism had to offer, the Holy Spirit develops in detail the chief point of the argument that Christ is superior to Aaron, summarizing it briefly in 8:1:

“Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest [as the one described in the preceding chapters], who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens

With this central theme in mind, read the epistle through, making a list of the ways in which Christ is referred to as “**better than**” the personages and the things of Judaism. This will give you a good outline view of the book.

For example, every devout Hebrew valued these gifts from God: the messages of the prophets; the ministry of angels; the life and service of Moses, Joshua, and Aaron; and the ritual associated with the Tabernacle and Temple, in charge of the Levitical priests.

The Holy Spirit takes these personages and sacred things of Judaism, and shows how the Lord Jesus Christ is superior to them all. Accordingly:

- In chapters 1 and 2 He is presented as better than prophets and angels;
- In chapters 3 and 4, better than Moses and Joshua;
- In 4:14-10:18, better than Aaron and all the Levitical priesthood.
- As the Great High Priest (4:14)—and no other priest is called “great” in the Bible

He ministers in a better tabernacle, under a better covenant, established upon better promises, because He offered a better sacrifice and assures His blood-bought children of a better hope of a better resurrection in a better country, even that “**city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God**” (11:10).

After you have read through the epistle, making your own list of these better things of Christ, read it again, writing down the first, second, and third references to Christ as the High Priest.

You will find that, having laid the foundation pillars to the superstructure in chapters 1 and 2, the Holy Spirit brings this section to its climax in 2:17, 18; for the Son of God who is also Son of Man is worthy to be “**a merciful and faithful high priest.**”

In 3:1-6 the Holy Spirit speaks of Him as “**the Apostle and High Priest of our confession,**” proving that He is superior to Moses.

Then He pauses for a long parenthesis, in 3:7-4:13, before continuing and developing the chief point of the epistle in 4:14-10:18. From 10:19 to 13:25 you will observe that the doctrinal message of the heart of the book is applied to the Christian life of every day.

Turn now to the table of contents, and fix in your mind the broad outline of the epistle as indicated there. You may express it in different words, but what do you find in this, a good, logical division of the book? Is it not a marvelous panorama of the person and work of our blessed Lord? The personal glory of the eternal Son of God shone on earth in the moral glory of the sinless Son of Man, whose official glories are manifest before men, angels and demons in our Prophet, Priest and King. Dare we who are called by His name fail to seek above all else, to glorify Him in our earthly testimony, as we are exhorted to do in the closing chapters of this epistle?

Throughout the book there are frequent parenthetical sections, in which the Holy Spirit faithfully warns the Hebrew Christians of the dangers of apostasy, exhorts them to go on with Christ, and encourages them to keep looking unto Jesus, with whom they will spend eternity in a better country. These parentheses are priceless in themselves.

If you have done the assigned reading thus far, you are ready now to go back to chapter 1 for a more careful study of the personal glory of the eternal Son of God.

The Son of God Is Better Than the Prophets

1:1-3

There is nothing nobler in all literature than Hebrews 1:1-3.

God spoke in the ages before Christianity by the prophets. It was a fragmentary and piecemeal revelation. Now His self-revelation is in a Son, whose personal dignity eclipses the prophets, and in whom we have the final and complete and abiding Word of God. The fact that God spoke in the Son is beyond all contradiction the greatest event in history. As the final Heir of all things, the Son is the Goal of history; as the brightness of the divine glory and the very expression of the divine substance:

- He was *before* all history; as the Creator of the worlds (or ages),
- He is the *Originator* of history; as the One who upholds all things by the word of His power,
- He *operates* in all history; and as the One who by Himself made purification for sin and has seated Himself at the right hand of the Majesty on high,
- He has become the Center of history.

Christianity is thus superior to Judaism. The message of the prophets is surpassed by that of the Son. They were many, succeeding one another. Who can speak after the Son? They stood for different aspects of the mind of God, each contributing only a fragment of truth; He is the Truth itself. They felt and confessed their sinfulness; He could ask, “**Which of you convinceth** [or, ‘convicteth’] **me of sin?**” (John 8:46). The Spirit came occasionally on them, but abides in His sevenfold office on Him. The Word came to them; they did not possess it. He is the Word. They had to examine their own predictions and seek for their meaning; in the Son “**are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge**” (Colossians 2:3). They were not the light; they merely bore witness to it; He is the true Light (John 1:9), which will yet illuminate the universe.

Look again at verses 1 and 2:

God . . . Hath . . . Spoken

“in time past”

“unto the fathers”

“by the prophets”

“at sundry times and in divers manners”

Through the written Word (John 1:1-14)

“in these last days”

“unto us”

“by his Son”

“once for all” (10:10)

Through the living Word (Revelation 19:13)

- “At sundry times” God spoke of old time—a little here, a little there.

- “In divers manners” His voice was heard of old—by vision, dream, fire, earthquake, flood and tempest; by law, prophecy, history, poem, psalm and parable; through angel, lawgiver, judge, poet, shepherd and king; in the burning bush and in the pillar of cloud and fire.

But now He has spoken completely and finally in the Son whose glory is the light of heaven.

How could even a bitterly persecuted Hebrew Christian in the days of the apostles think of compromising his testimony for such a Saviour? How could an enlightened, yet unregenerated, Hebrew turn away from his Messiah and Lord of glory?

As you read once more verses 2 and 3, note the number of descriptive terms suggested concerning the Son of God. What an array of glories!

1. *The Heir of all things*
2. *The Creator*
3. *The brightness of the glory of God*
4. *The express image of His person*
5. *The God of providence* (cf. Colossians 1:11)
6. *The Lamb of Calvary*
7. *The Great High Priest*—ever living, interceding

Be sure to memorize this sevenfold description of the fullness and glory of the Son of God, either in the language of Scripture or in your own words. Do you have a single need that such a Lord cannot supply?

The Son of God Is Better Than the Angels

1:4-14

The constellation of seven stars of first magnitude of verses 2 and 3 is followed by another constellation of seven luminaries; for the Holy Spirit quotes seven passages from the Psalms which cover our Lord’s entire pathway from the *past eternity* to His *present session* at God’s right hand, yea, even unto the *future eternity*. Thus His glories, personal, moral and official, pass before us.

This wonderful Being, Son in His deity, yet Man in His incarnation, is seen in the highest place in heaven, above angelic hosts, principalities and powers in heavenly places, above cherubim and seraphim, above Michael or Gabriel, above the created sphere, and that as the Sin-purger and as the One in whom humanity, originally made lower than angels, is seen higher than they, on the very throne of Deity. And when, as “**the first-begotten**” from the dead, God brings Him again into the world, He will command all His angelic hosts, and “**ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands**” to worship Him (Revelation 5:11, 12).

Even the Christ-rejecting Jews accepted the Old Testament as the Word of God; therefore, when their own Psalms, to say nothing of other portions, described “**beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow**” (I Peter 1:11), only a stubborn apostate could turn his back upon the true Messiah.

But look again at these seven quotations from the Psalms, used here to prove Christ’s superiority to angels; and once more make your own list of them, together with the references from the Psalms. Read also Luke 24:44 for the risen Lord’s own statement that the Psalms spoke of Him (cf. Luke 24:27). Take time to read the entire Psalm from which each of these passages is quoted.

Perhaps such an outline as the following will help you see the wonders of these seven quotations:

<i>The Prophecy</i>	<i>The Quotation in Hebrews 1</i>	<i>The Person of Christ</i>
1. Psalm 2:7	verse 5a	God’s only begotten Son
2. Psalm 89:26 (cf. II Samuel 7:14)	verse 5b	The Son in whom the Father was well pleased
3. Deuteronomy 32:43, Septuagint Version * (cf. Psalm 97:7)	verse 6	The risen Lord, “the first-born,” returning to earth
4. Psalm 104:4	verse 7	The angels—spirit-beings; servants of the Son
5. Psalm 45:6, 7	verses 8, 9	The Son—eternal God
6. Psalm 102:25-27	verses 10-12	The Son—eternal Lord and Creator
7. Psalm 110:1	verse 13	The Great High Priest at the right hand of the Father

** The Greek translation of the Old Testament used by Christ when He was on I earth. All of the Old Testament quotations in Hebrews are taken from this version.*

If you will use any good marginal reference Bible to locate other New Testament passages where these verses are quoted, you will receive added blessing. For example, our Lord applied Psalm 110:1 to Himself when talking to the Pharisees (Matthew 22:41-46).

What a welcome the risen and ascended Lord must have received from the heavenly hosts as the Father greeted Him with these words, “**Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool**” (Hebrews 1:13)!

Again, in his sermon at Antioch in Pisidia, Paul said that Psalm 2:7 was a prophecy of Christ (Acts 13:33); and the same passage is used again in Hebrews 5:5 to describe the Lord Jesus.

A study of the Messianic Psalms from which these passages are quoted will also yield rich rewards. Attention is called here to the context of only one of these quotations, Psalm 102:23-27.

In verse 23 the Son said of His Father words that were prophetic of His death: “**He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days.**”

Then He prayed in language that may well have been uttered in Gethsemane many centuries later: “**O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days**” (v. 24).

And to this cry of agony, planned from all eternity, written in the Psalm, and voiced by the suffering Saviour, the Father’s reassuring promise of resurrection for His eternal Son was spoken, first in the Psalm, then quoted in Hebrews 1:10-12:

“**Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth . . . thou remainest . . . thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.**”

We stand amazed in the presence of such a Saviour—and such a Book!

In these seven remarkable prophecies alone, written hundreds of years before they came to pass, the Holy Spirit described the Lord Jesus Christ in:

- His divine power and glory,
- His work of creation,
- His eternal Sonship,
- His sinless life,
- His vicarious atonement,
- His bodily resurrection,
- His ascension into heaven to intercede for His redeemed at the right hand of the Father,
- His coming again in glory to be worshiped by all His creatures—including the angels
- His everlasting throne and kingdom.

It is a graphic picture of the personal glory of the Son of God.

- He has a better name than that of the angels;
- He is God’s Son, to whom the Father “**hath . . . given . . . a name which is above every name**” (Philippians 2:9).
- He is the Creator; angels are His creatures.
- He is Lord and King; angels are His subjects and servants.
- He is the One worshiped; the angels are His worshipers. Better than the angels?

“**Yea, he is altogether lovely**” (Song of Solomon 5:16).

“**Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands**” of the redeemed, and the angels before the throne of God proclaim with a loud voice,

“**Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing**” (Revelation 5:11, 12).

Psalm 2:7, quoted in Hebrews 1:5; 5:5 (cf. Acts 13:33; Romans 1:4), regards the resurrection of Christ as the manifestation of a prior Sonship, not as the origin of His Sonship (*Jamieson-Fausset-Brown*). In other words, the Holy Trinity is eternal; the Father declared the Sonship of our Lord in Psalm 2:7; centuries later His eternal Sonship was manifested to the world in His virgin birth and throughout His earthly ministry; and in His resurrection He was “**declared to be the Son of God with power**” (Romans 1:4).

“**Ministering Spirits . . . for . . . Heirs of Salvation**”

1:14

The Epistle to the Hebrews has much to say about the ministry of angels on behalf of the heirs of salvation, God’s blood-bought children. Read carefully the following verses from this book and from related passages of Scripture:

1. *God’s messengers* (Hebrews 1:7)

“**Who maketh his angels spirits** [or, ‘his angels winds’]; **his ministers a flaming fire**” (Psalm 104:4).

2. *The believers’ ministers* (Hebrews 1:14)

The Lord Jesus also, referring to little children, spoke of “*their angels*” (Matthew 18:10; cf. Psalm 91:11; 34:7; I Kings 19:5; Daniel 6:22; Acts 5:19; 12:7-10).

3. “**An innumerable company of angels**” (Hebrews 12:22; cf. Revelation 5:11)

4. Worshipers of the risen Lord at His second coming (Hebrews 1:6; cf. Matthew 25-31)

In Hebrews 2, where Christ’s perfect humanity is the chief topic, man’s position in this life is described as lower than the angels; but in heaven the redeemed of God will share the glory of Christ, higher than that of the angels of God.

Not once does the Bible state or imply that human beings will be angels in heaven. Angels are spirit-beings, God’s ministers and ours. They “**desire to look into**” the story of the cross and the empty tomb (I Peter 1:12); but redeemed sinners, not angels, are entrusted with the proclamation of that glorious message.

(For a more complete discussion of Bible truth concerning angels, see the *Scofield Reference Bible* note on Hebrews 1:14).

Did Paul Write Hebrews?

When God is silent, who is man to question? That the human author of the epistle is purposely kept out of sight seems evident; for it is Christ who is the Apostle described here (3:1), and the Holy Spirit would hold Him only before our view.

Yet many Bible students believe that Paul wrote this book; and that, therefore, it bears the full weight of his apostolic authority. Here are some of the reasons for this view:

1. *The doctrine is Pauline.*
2. *The writer had been a prisoner for Christ's sake (10:34).*
3. *He knew Timothy (13:23).*
4. *He was in Italy when he wrote this epistle (13:24).*
5. *The personal allusions remind us of Paul (13:22-25).*
6. *Like all of Paul's letters, the epistle closes with a reference to the grace of God.*
7. *The early Church fathers ascribed the epistle to Paul (cf. II Peter 3:15).*
8. *There is no substantial evidence that another wrote it; nor is there reason to suppose that Paul was not the human author.*

Assignment for Exam 1

1. If you have been faithful in your study of this lesson, doing all the suggested reading, you should practically know Hebrews 1 from memory. If not, will you try to learn it? This is not required, but it will more than repay you.
2. In the exam for this lesson, as well as for those to follow, you will be questioned on all the subject matter presented in the textbook, or specially assigned.
3. Be sure to look up and study all Bible references given in each lesson. You will not be required to memorize these unless they are definitely assigned.
4. Remember that you may use the exams as an aid to study.
5. When you have finished your study of this lesson, go to Exam 1, and answer the questions as indicated.

CHAPTER ONE EXAM

NOTE: PLEASE DO NOT CONTACT THE MOODY CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL FOR GRADING OF YOUR EXAMS – IF YOU WISH TO COMPLETE THEM, CONSIDER THEM AS AN OPEN BOOK EXAM

1. Complete: (10 points)

a. The threefold purpose of the inspired writer of the epistle to the Hebrews was

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

b. What is the theme, or “chief point,” of the epistle?

c. According to the textbook, what important event in Jewish history had not yet taken place at the time this epistle was written?

2. Fill in the blanks. (10 points)

a. The personal glory of Christ has to do with His

b. The moral glory of Christ has to do with His

c. The official glories of Christ concern His

d. The eternal Son of God became the Son of Man in order to

e. Therefore, as the God-Man, He is our

(Write here Christ’s official title, which summarizes the “chief point” of this epistle).

3. Complete. (20 points)

Name five ways by which God spoke in Old Testament times unto the fathers.

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

(4) _____

(5) _____

Name four types of persons by whom He thus spoke.

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

(4) _____

How has God finally spoken? (1:2)

4. Name the seven terms used in 1:1-3 to describe Christ's fullness and glory. (7 points)

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

(4) _____

(5) _____

(6) _____

(7) _____

5. Match the Old Testament prophecy of Christ in column 1 with the corresponding reference (in Hebrews I) to the Person and work of Christ in column 2. Place the letter of the correct prophecy in column 1 in the proper blank in column 2. (10 points)

Column 1 EXAMPLE: <i>Prophecy of Christ</i>	Column 2 The Son in whom the Father was well pleased (1:5b) <i>Person and Work of Christ</i>	g
a. Psalm 2:7 b. Psalm 27:1 c. Psalm 32:1 d. Psalm 104:4 e. Psalm 45:6, 7 f. Psalm 102:25-27 g. Psalm 89:26 h. Psalm 110:1 i. Psalm 23:2	(1) The Great High Priest at the right hand of the Father (1:13) (2) The Son—eternal God (1:8, 9) (3) God’s only begotten Son (1:5a) (4) The angels—spirit beings; servants of the Son (1:7) (5) The Son—eternal Lord and Creator (1:10-12).	

6. Name four ways in which Christ is proved to be superior to angels, as set forth in these Old Testament quotations. (8 points)

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

(4) _____

7. State briefly the fourfold summary of the teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews concerning the holy angels. (10 points)

a. 1:7 _____

b. 1:14 _____

c. 12:22 _____

d. 1:6 _____

e. What did Christ say about angels in Matthew 18:10b?

8. Give five reasons which lead many to believe that Paul was the apostle through whom the Holy Spirit wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews. (10 points)

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

(4) _____

(5) _____

9. Look up the following Scripture references, and in the blank spaces provided put the correct name. (10 points)

a. Acts 9:18-22 (1) Who spoke concerning Christ? _____

b. Acts 7:59 (2) Who spoke to Christ? _____

c. Hebrews 1:2 (3) Who spoke in Christ? _____

d. Acts 2:25-31 (4) Who spoke in prophecy of Christ? _____

e. Luke 2 11 (5) Who spoke to shepherds of Christ? _____

10. With your Bible open at Psalm 102:23-27, explain briefly what this entire prophecy foretold. (You may use your Bible to find related references.) (5 points)

~ end of chapter 1 ~

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