

THE VERDICT TEACHING SERIES



REVELATION

Chapters 1-3



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THE VERDICT

WITH PASTOR JOHN H. MUNRO

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We hope you find this study guide helpful as you follow along with Pastor John Munro in his current teaching series and continue your own study in God's Word.

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INTRODUCTION

The Book of Revelation

FIND THE BOOK OF REVELATION to be one of the most fascinating books in all of the Bible. Many ignore it because they find it incomprehensible; others are so captivated by it that they study it almost to the exclusion of the rest of the Bible. Others use it to make sensational and outlandish predictions.

Our goal is to study and interpret the text of Holy Scripture. Many books of the Bible — such as Daniel, Zechariah, and Revelation — are full of prophecy, and we are to be diligent and obedient students of the Word. So don't say you are not interested in prophecy!

“Revelation” denotes something hidden now being revealed. It is a revelation given by Jesus Christ to the apostle John about “the things that must soon take place.” While we will focus on the first three chapters in this initial study and the letters to the seven churches, the center of our study will remain the matchless and majestic Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, our Lord and Master and soon coming King.

There is also a special blessing given to those who read and hear “the words of this prophecy” (Revelation 1:3). So I invite you to join me in this exciting exploration and receive the blessing of God.

Warmly in Christ,

John

REVELATION

MESSAGE 1

Jesus Is Coming Back

Revelation 1:1–3

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,² who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.³ Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION PRESENTS the revelation given to the apostle John by Jesus Christ about “the things that must soon take place.” John is writing from the island of Patmos around A.D. 95.

Four Approaches to Interpreting Revelation

- Preterist
- Historical
- Idealist or allegorical
- Futurist (*our view*)

The Purpose of Revelation

- Encouragement and warning
- The consummation of the ages
- The exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ

Through Revelation, there is an underlying sense of urgency because Jesus Christ is returning, and He is coming soon. God's timing and ours are very different, but we are to be prepared for His return at any moment. "Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door" (James 5:7–9).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Why is Revelation relevant for everyone?

Why is the Futurist approach interpretation the one we will follow?

How is Revelation the capstone of the entire Bible?

PERSONAL RESPONSE

The verdict is yours.

The message of Revelation is encouraging for believers. And it stands as a warning for those who do not know Jesus Christ. So how do you feel about Revelation? Why?

Are you prepared for the imminent return of Jesus Christ?

REVELATION

MESSAGE 2

Lord of the Universe

Revelation 1:4–8

John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne,⁵ and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood⁶ and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.⁷ Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

⁸ "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

IN REVELATION, JOHN IS WRITING "to the seven churches that are in Asia" (1:4). Numbers are important in the Bible and will continue to be important in Revelation, yet beyond all detail, we are to stay focused on the Lord Jesus and God's grace.

The Trinity: Biblical Christianity is Trinitarian

- God the Father
- God the Holy Spirit
- God the Son (*a threefold description*)
 1. The Faithful Witness
 2. Firstborn of the Dead
 3. Ruler of Kings on Earth

The Work of Jesus Christ

- He loves us (5).
- Jesus “has freed us from our sins by His blood” (5).
- Jesus has “made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father” (6).

The Return of Jesus Christ

- The certainty of His return
- The Rapture vs. The Second Coming: a big picture view of the future

REVIEW QUESTIONS

What attributes and images are associated with each member of the Trinity? Explain the meaning and significance of each of the three descriptions of Jesus Christ.

Why is an understanding of the work of Jesus such an encouragement to the seven churches and to us? Did you have any fresh discoveries during the discussion?

How is the Rapture different from the return of Jesus Christ in power and glory? In relation to these, when does the Tribulation occur? The Millennial Kingdom?

PERSONAL RESPONSE

The verdict is yours.

Do you grasp the concept of the Trinity? How does this impact the way you view and approach your spiritual life?

Do you realize that the work of Jesus was accomplished for you? How does that change your perspective?

How do you feel about the return of Jesus? Do you have unfinished business, or are you eagerly anticipating His return?

REVELATION

MESSAGE 3

Lord of the Churches

Revelation 1:9–20

I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.¹⁰ I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet¹¹ saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

¹² Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands,¹³ and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest.¹⁴ The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire,¹⁵ his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters.¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

¹⁷ When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last,¹⁸ and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.¹⁹ Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.²⁰ As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

THERE IS NO PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF JESUS in the Bible. Yet John receives a vision of Jesus that communicates to us about His identity, His power, and His sovereignty.

Jesus Christ is sovereign Lord over the Church (10–16).

- Jesus Christ is in the midst of the churches (12–13).
- A sevenfold description of the Lord Jesus (14–16):
 - “The hairs of His head were white like wool, as white as snow” (14)
 - “His eyes were like a flame of fire” (14b)
 - “His feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace” (15a)
 - “His voice was like the roar of many waters” (15b)
 - “In His right hand He held seven stars” (16a)
 - “From His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword” (16)
 - “His face was like the sun shining in full strength” (16b)

Jesus Christ is the sovereign Lord over death and Hades (17–20).

- “The first and the last” and “alive forevermore”
- “I have the keys of Death and Hades”
- “The living One”

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Explain the significance of each element of the apostle John’s vision of Jesus.

What are these elements meant to communicate to us? How do they reinforce His power and His sovereignty?

What is John's response to this vision?

What does Jesus do?

PERSONAL RESPONSE

The verdict is yours.

How does this vision of Jesus go alongside the idea of Jesus you may have previously had?

What has changed? Why?

We noted John's response to the vision of Jesus. What is your response?

REVELATION

MESSAGE 4

The Fallen Church

Revelation 2:1–7

“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

² ‘I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. ³ I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary. ⁴ But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. ⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. ⁶ Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.’

CHAPTER 2 BEGINS THE SECOND MAJOR DIVISION of the book of Revelation as the Lord Jesus examines the seven churches and gives His evaluation. These were seven actual churches of the first century, yet these letters are for all churches. The first church addressed is the church at Ephesus.

The Background of the Church at Ephesus

- The historical background of Ephesus
- The spiritual background of Ephesus

The Divine Diagnosis

- The church at Ephesus was outwardly impressive:
 - Active in service
 - Persevering in difficulties
 - Discerning in doctrine
- The church at Ephesus was inwardly hollow (4):
“But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first”

The Divine Remedy

- Action is required:
 - Remember (5)
 - Repent (5)
 - Return (5)
- “Do the works you did at first”

The Divine Promise

- “To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God” (7).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Describe the city of Ephesus as it was during the first century.

Who began the church at Ephesus? What was its heritage?

Describe the strengths of the church at Ephesus. Why is the weakness so serious? What happens if they don't heed the warning?personal response?

What is significant about the promise given?

PERSONAL RESPONSE

The verdict is yours.

Do you take the Word of God seriously? Have you placed your personal trust in Jesus Christ? What is the Spirit of God saying to you today?

What do you have in common with the church at Ephesus? If you are already a follower of Christ, is it possible that you have abandoned the love you had at first?

REVELATION

MESSAGE 5

The Suffering Church

Revelation 2:8–11

“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: ‘The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.

⁹ “I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰ Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

¹¹ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.’

PERSECUTION AND SUFFERING KEEP THE CHURCH PURE, focused on the Gospel, loving Christ, loving others, and looking expectantly for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven. Yet many of us often escape persecution because our lives are little different from unbelievers.

The City of Smyrna**The Persecuted Church**

- The church at Smyrna experienced “tribulation.”
- The church at Smyrna experienced poverty.
- The church at Smyrna experienced slander.

The Pure Church

- No condemnation
- Do not fear: “Be faithful unto death” (10).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

What about the city of Smyrna made the church there ripe for persecution?

What does the New Testament teach us about the purpose of suffering and persecution?
Why is that difficult for us to understand?

What is unique about our Lord Jesus' evaluation of Smyrna? What is the significance of the "ten days" of tribulation? What is their ultimate reward for continuing to be faithful?

PERSONAL RESPONSE

The verdict is yours.

What stands out to you personally from the evaluation of Jesus? If you were a member of the church of Smyrna, how would you be encouraged?

Have you experienced persecution or suffered for your faith in Jesus Christ? Is this because you sometimes hide or compromise your faith? How will you stand strong for Jesus going forward?

REVELATION

MESSAGE 6

The Compromising Church

Revelation 2:12–17

“And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: ‘The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.

¹³ “I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. ¹⁴ But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. ¹⁵ So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. ¹⁶ Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth. ¹⁷ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.’

THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD. It is inspired by God, without error, relevant, and sufficient for every spiritual need. In our culture, where absolute truth is rejected, it is imperative that we remain faithful.

The Background of the Church at Pergamum**Serious Compromise in the Church**

- “The teaching of Balaam” and “The teaching of the Nicolaitans”

The Consequences of Compromise

- “I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth” (16).

The Blessing to the One Who Conquers (17)

REVIEW QUESTIONS

How is the city of Pergamum described? Did the church at Pergamum deny the faith? What was significant about Antipas?

What was the nature of the compromise in the church at Pergamum?

If they do not repent, what will be the consequences? What is the significance of the two-edged sword?

What is the reward for those who repent and conquer?

PERSONAL RESPONSE

The verdict is yours.

How do you react to pressure from others? Where is there compromise in your life?

What opportunities do you have to stand strong for truth?

How is your heart? Is it hard or soft to the Word?

REVELATION

MESSAGE 7

The Tolerant Church

Revelation 2:18–29

“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: ‘The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.

¹⁹ ‘‘I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. ²⁰ But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. ²¹ I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. ²² Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, ²³ and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works. ²⁴ But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden. ²⁵ Only hold fast what you have until I come. ²⁶ The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, ²⁷ and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. ²⁸ And I will give him the morning star. ²⁹ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

ONE OF THE HIGHEST VIRTUES applauded in our society today is tolerance. It seems that we are tolerant of everything other than intolerance! And there is an important sense in which we are to be tolerant of others. But tolerance must never triumph over truth.

The Background of the Church at Thyatira

The Commendation

- The Lord Jesus is the one giving the commendation.
- The Son of God knows their works (19).

The Condemnation

- The church tolerated sin (20).
- Sin cannot be tolerated. Judgment would come if they did not repent (22–23).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

From the perspective of church history, what was interesting about the city of Thyatira?

Why are the descriptors of Jesus important in verses 18 and 23? What is Jesus saying about His awareness of the issues and His knowledge of their minds and hearts?

What did Thyatira do well?

But what sin was Thyatira tolerating? Was everyone involved?

What was the reward promised to those who were faithful?

PERSONAL RESPONSE

The verdict is yours.

What have you tolerated (or what are you tolerating) that you shouldn't?

Have you ever been called or convicted to repent, and you resisted?

Do you understand that the Lord is merciful, yet He will not tolerate sin? Have you repented of the sin in your life?

REVELATION

MESSAGE 8

The Dead Church

Revelation 3:1–6

“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: ‘The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.

“I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead.² Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God.³ Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.⁴ Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy.⁵ The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.⁶ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

THE TRUE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST IS ALIVE, not dead. The true church grows deep in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and grows out, displaying the love of God and reaching the world with the Gospel. But many churches are dead or dying. Here is a warning.

The Sad Reality

- The church in Sardis was dead.
- “You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead” (1).
- It’s possible to have impressive buildings, budgets, and programs, but the life and power of the Holy Spirit are gone.

The Spiritual Remedy

- The Lord graciously provides a remedy:

“Wake up” (2).

“Strengthen what remains” (2).

“Remember, then what you received and heard” (3).

“Keep it” (3). Take action. Stop the decline. Hold fast.

“Repent” (3). Change must take place in your heart and life.

The Sure Reward

- There is a spiritual remnant in Sardis.
- The promise to the conqueror (5)

REVIEW QUESTIONS

What did it mean that the church at Sardis was dead? What did that look like? Were they aware of it?

What can we learn from the spiritual remnant at Sardis? What is the significance of not having “soiled their garments”?

Describe the difference between having the Holy Spirit and being filled with the Holy Spirit. Are you filled with the Spirit?

PERSONAL RESPONSE

The verdict is yours.

As you think about your spiritual life, is your relationship with Christ living and growing? Or could you be living with a false sense of security?

Are you encouraged by the picture of salvation given in the promise? Is your name written in the Lamb's book of life?

REVELATION

MESSAGE 9

The Persevering Church

Revelation 3:7–13

“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.

⁸ “I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. ⁹ Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie — behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you. ¹⁰ Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. ¹¹ I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. ¹² The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. ¹³ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

FOLLOWING JESUS IS A LIFE OF FULFILLMENT, a life of meaning, a life of hope, and a life of usefulness. Philadelphia receives no criticism from Jesus. Instead, it stands as an example of a church that perseveres, pleases God, and makes a difference in the pagan culture.

The Description of the Lord Jesus

- His character: “the Holy One”
- “The true one” (7)
- His control and authority: “has the key of David” (7)

A Door of Opportunity

- “An open door which no one is able to shut” (8)

A Pillar of Security

- The promises for being faithful:

“The synagogue of Satan” (9) will acknowledge that Jesus is Lord.

Followers of Jesus will not go through the seven years of Tribulation (10–11).

The great promise of Revelation: “I am coming soon” (11)

A permanent place in God’s house: “A pillar in the temple of my God” (12)

Sealed with “the name of my God,” “the name of the city of my God” (12), and “my own new name” (12–13)

REVIEW QUESTIONS

How are we encouraged by each of the attributes of Jesus? Why does it matter that Jesus “holds all of the keys”?

Why is the church in Philadelphia one that could be easily underestimated?

What is meant by the “open door” (8)? What does this tell us about opportunities to serve God?

PERSONAL RESPONSE

The verdict is yours.

It can be easy to become weary and discouraged. How do the testimony of the church in Philadelphia and this letter from Jesus encourage you to persevere?

What doors of opportunity has God opened in your life? Are you praying for these opportunities?

REVELATION

MESSAGE 10

The Lukewarm Church

Revelation 3:14–22

“And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation.

¹⁵ “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! ¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷ For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. ¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. ¹⁹ Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. ²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. ²¹ The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. ²² He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

THE LETTER TO LAODICEA IS THE LAST of the letters to the seven churches. It receives the most scathing of condemnations from the Lord Jesus. Why?

The Rebuke

- Laodicea was a lukewarm church (15–16).

The Reality

- The church at Laodicea is blind to its true condition. The spiritual reality is very different from their self-assessment (17).

The Remedy

- “Be zealous and repent” (18–19).
- Jesus loves the Laodiceans (19). His reproof and discipline flow from His love for them.
- The specifics of the remedy (18).

The Response

- Jesus is outside the church, outside their lives (20).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

What is meant by lukewarm? Why is the comparison to hot/cold potentially helpful? How would this be seen in a church?

Is the church at Laodicea aware of their condition? Do you see how this is a powerful picture of our need for the Word of God in our lives?

How are the specifics of the remedy related to the local characteristics of Laodicea? Describe what Jesus meant by the pictures of the gold, the garments, and the salve.

How does the image of Jesus outside the door paint a rich picture of the invitation to salvation — and the reality that salvation is a relationship with Jesus Christ?

PERSONAL RESPONSE

The verdict is yours.

Are you surprised that the most scathing condemnation is for being lukewarm and not for something like heretical doctrine or gross immorality?

How would you describe the temperature of your spiritual life?

Have you opened the door to the Lord Jesus in your life? Do you know what it is to sup with Him, to have a living and growing personal relationship with the living Christ?

THE VERDICT

WITH PASTOR JOHN H. MUNRO

"Where the Gospel is preached, the lives of men and women and boys and girls are transformed. Through His death and resurrection, Christ gives us peace with God, present power for living, and future hope for eternal life." — John H. Munro

The Verdict is a radio and podcast program featuring the expository Bible teaching of Pastor John Munro.



Born and raised in Scotland, John graduated from the University of Edinburgh and practiced law in Scotland before God called him to full-time ministry. He and his wife, Gudny, moved to Texas, where he attended Dallas Theological Seminary.

For more than 30 years, John has dedicated his life to pastoral ministry, preaching and teaching the Word of God. He presently serves as Senior Pastor of Calvary Church in Charlotte, North Carolina.

On The Verdict, listeners are challenged to turn to the Bible and render a "verdict" as they consider their personal response to the truth of God's Word. John presents a clear examination of Scripture, offering insight and application for all backgrounds, from those unfamiliar with the Gospel to mature believers following Christ.

Discover the many ways to hear The Verdict, including the daily program and John's weekly Avizandum podcast. Find full details, including how to partner with our ministry at TheVerdict.org.

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