

# “ ‘Fear God *and* Give Glory to Him’ ”



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week’s Study:** *Revelation 14; Gen. 22:12; Eccles. 12:13, 14; Col. 3:1, 2; Heb. 12:1, 2; 1 Cor. 3:16, 17.*

**Memory Text:** “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (*Revelation 14:12, NKJV*).

Danish author Søren Kierkegaard told a parable about the end time. It went something like this:

A fire broke out backstage in a big theater. A clown, who had been part of the performance, came out to warn the audience: “*Get out; the place is on fire!*” The audience thought it was just a big joke, part of the show, that’s all, and just applauded. He repeated the warning: “*Get out! Get out!*” But the more emphatically he warned them, the greater the applause. For Kierkegaard, that is how the world is going to end; that is, to the general applause of wits who believe it’s a joke.

The end of the world, and events leading up to it, are, as we know, no joke. The world faces the most serious crisis since the Flood. In fact, Peter himself uses the story of the Flood as a symbol of the end, warning that just as the world of old perished by water, in the end times, “the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up” (*2 Pet. 3:10, NKJV*). Having been warned about what is coming, we now need to be prepared for it, as well.

\* *Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 22.*

## Fear God

The purpose of the book of Revelation for our generation is to prepare a people to be ready for Jesus’ soon return and to unite with Him in giving His last-day message to the world. Revelation reveals the plans of God and unmask the plans of Satan. It presents God’s final appeal, His urgent, eternal, universal message for all humanity.

**Read** the apostle John’s urgent end-time appeal in Revelation 14:7. (See also Gen. 22:12; Ps. 89:7; Prov. 2:5; Eccles. 12:13, 14; Eph. 5:21.) **What specific instruction does he give us?**

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The Greek New Testament word for “fear” in Revelation 14:7 is *phobeo*. It is used here not in the sense of being afraid of God but in the sense of reverence, awe, and respect. It conveys the thought of absolute loyalty to God and full surrender to His will. It is an attitude of mind that is God-centered rather than self-centered. It is the opposite of Lucifer’s attitude in Isaiah 14:13, 14, when he says in his heart, “‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High’ ” (NKJV).

Instead, it is the attitude of Christ, who, though “being in the form of God . . . humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:6, 8, NKJV).

The essence of the great controversy revolves around submission to God. Lucifer was self-centered. He refused to submit to any authority except his own. Rather than submit to the One upon the throne, Lucifer desired to rule from the throne. Put simply, to fear God is to place Him first in our thinking. It is to renounce our self-centeredness and pride and to live a life wholly for Him.

And it obviously must be important because it’s the first of the words out of the mouth of the first angel of the three.

Hence, we must take heed.

**What has been your own experience of fearing God? How would you explain to someone, in a positive way, why “the fear of God” is something good?**

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## Fearing and Obeying God

What else does the Bible teach us about what it means to fear God?

**Read Deuteronomy 6:2; Psalm 119:73, 74; and Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14.**  
**What do these texts reveal is the result of “fearing God”?**

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These passages reveal a linkage between fearing God and keeping His commandments. Fearing God is an attitude of reverential respect that leads us to obedience. Heaven’s urgent appeal is for those saved by grace to be obedient to God’s commands (*Eph. 2:8–10*). Grace does not free us from obeying the commands of God. The gospel sets us free from the law’s condemnation, not from our responsibility to obey it.

Grace not only delivers us from the guilt of our past, but it also empowers us to live godly, obedient lives in the present. The apostle Paul declares that “we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations” (*Rom. 1:5, NKJV*).

There are some people who have the strange idea that salvation by grace somehow negates the law of God or minimizes the necessity for obedience. They believe that any talk about obedience is legalism. They have declared, “All I want is Jesus.” The question is, which Jesus? A Jesus of our own making, or the Jesus of Scripture? The Christ of Scripture never leads us to downplay His law, which is the transcript of His character. The Christ of Scripture never leads us to minimize the doctrines of the Bible, which reveal more clearly who He is and His plan for this world. The Christ of Scripture never leads us to reduce His teaching to pious platitudes that are nonessential. Christ is the embodiment of all doctrinal truth. Jesus is truth incarnated. He is doctrine lived out.

Revelation’s final appeal calls us through faith in Jesus to accept the fullness of everything He offers. It calls us to “fear God,” which is expressed by faith in His redeeming power to empower us to live godly, obedient lives.

**How do Jesus’ words here—“ ‘And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell’ ” (*Matt. 10:28, NKJV*)—help us understand what it means to fear God?**

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## Living a God-Centered Life

In an age of consumerism, when secular values have made self the center, heaven’s appeal is to turn from the tyranny of self-centeredness and the bondage of self-inflated importance to place God at the center of our lives. For some, money is the center of their lives. For others, it is pleasure or power. For some, it may be sports, music, or entertainment. Revelation’s message is a clarion call to fear, respect, and honor God as life’s true Center.

**Read** Matthew 6:33; Colossians 3:1, 2; and Hebrews 12:1, 2. What do these passages tell us about making God the true center of our lives?

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The central issue in earth’s final conflict is a battle for the mind. It really is one of allegiance, authority, and commitment to God’s will.

The final battle in the great controversy is between good and evil for control of our thoughts. The apostle Paul gives us this admonition: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (*Phil. 2:5, NKJV*). The mind is the citadel of our being. It is the wellspring of our actions. The word “let” means to allow or to choose. It speaks of a volitional act of the will. The choice to have the mind of Christ is the choice to allow Jesus to shape our thinking by filling our minds with the things of eternity. Our actions reveal where our thinking process is. To fear God is to make Him first in our lives.

Think about how easy, in one sense, it is to control your thoughts, at least when you are conscious that you need to control them. Often, the problem is that unless we make a conscious effort to dwell on the right things, the “things above, not . . . things on the earth” (*Col. 3:2, NKJV*), our minds, fallen and sinful as they are, will naturally tend toward the base things, the things of the world. Hence, we need to, as Paul said, purposely and deliberately choose, using the sacred gift of free will, to dwell on the heavenly things.

**“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things”** (*Phil. 4:8, NKJV*). How do we learn to do what Paul tells us here?

## Giving Glory to God

A study of the use of the phrase in the Old Testament to “give glory to” God (*Rev. 14:7*) shows that it, interestingly enough, often (but not only) appears in the context of divine judgment (*Josh. 7:19; 1 Sam. 6:5; Jer. 13:15, 16; Mal. 2:2*), just as it does in the first angel’s message, as well (*Rev. 14:7*). This idea is seen, too, in Revelation 19:1, 2—“Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! For true and righteous are His judgments’ ” (*NKJV*).

**Read 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; and 1 Corinthians 10:31. How do these passages help us understand one way that we can glorify God?**

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According to the apostle Paul, our bodies are a sanctuary, the dwelling place of the Spirit of God, a temple made holy by the presence of God. The Scriptures give us a clarion call to glorify God in every aspect of our lives. When God is the center of our lives, our one desire is to give glory to Him, whether through our diet, our dress, our entertainment, or our interaction with others. We give glory to God as we reveal His character of love to the world through our commitment to doing His will. This is even more important in the light of earth’s end-time judgment.

**Read Romans 12:1, 2. What appeal does the apostle Paul make regarding the totality of our life choices?**

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The New Testament Greek word for bodies in this passage is *somata*, which is better translated the collective sum of who you are—body, mind, and emotions. The Phillips translation of the Bible translates the expression “reasonable service” as an “act of intelligent worship.” In other words, when you make a total commitment to “fear God” and “glorify Him” in all you do, giving your mind, body, and emotions to Him, this is an act of intelligent worship. And, too, in light of God’s judgment, taking heed to obey is, indeed, a good idea.

**Think about what you do with your body. What can you do to make sure that you are, indeed, glorifying God with it?**

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## Revelation's Overcomers

“Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (*Rev. 14:12*). This is the depiction of God’s faithful people in the last days. Yet, the only way anyone can keep the commandments of God, then or now, is through the faith of Jesus. Notice our text does not say, “faith in Jesus,” although that is extremely important, but this expression, “the faith of Jesus,” is something more. It is the quality of faith that enabled Christ to be victorious over Satan’s fiercest temptations. Faith is a gift given to each believer. When we exercise the faith that the Holy Spirit puts in our hearts, that faith grows. We overcome, not by our willpower, but by the power of the living Christ working through us. We overcome not because of who we are but because of who He is.

We can overcome because He overcame. We can be victorious because He was victorious. We can triumph over temptation because He triumphed over temptation.

**Read** Hebrews 4:14–16 and Hebrews 7:25. What is the means of overcoming and living lives that “fear God” and “give Him glory”?

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Jesus, the divine Son of God, has overcome the wiles of the devil. He faced temptations trusting in the promises of God, surrendering His will to the Father’s will, and depending on the Father’s power. Trusting Him, looking to Him, believing in Him, we, too, can be victorious. Jesus is our all in all, and the three angels’ messages are all about Him. Revelation’s message is one of victory, not defeat. It speaks of a people who through His grace and by His power overcome.

The word “overcome” in one form or another is used 11 times in the book of Revelation. In the vision of the seven churches representing the Christian church from the first century to our time, there are believers in every generation who, John says, “overcame.” At the end time, those that “overcome” inherit all things (*Rev. 21:7*). This is not legalism. It is victory through Jesus Christ, whose perfect life of perfect righteousness, and that alone, is what gives them the promise of eternal life. It is faith in action. It is transforming, life-changing, miraculous grace in the life of the believer.

**Are there things in your life you desire to overcome? How can we translate our desires into action? What practical steps can we take to become Revelation’s “overcomers”?**

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**Further Thought:** Think about the amazing words of Paul in Hebrews 7:25, which, describing Jesus as our High Priest, says that “He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him” (*NKJV*). “*Save to the uttermost . . .*” The Greek word for “uttermost” means “full, complete, total.” It is Jesus who saves us; our job is to surrender to Him, claiming His victory for us. Our trust must be in Him, not in ourselves.

“We can summarize the force of the expression ‘fear God’ in Revelation as God’s final call to humanity to choose Him as their glorious and majestic God, . . . who will be victorious over the forces of evil that oppose Him and His plan for the human race (cf. [Rev.] 14:9–11). This fear does not manifest itself, at least not for now (cf., [Rev.] 6:14–17), in terror and trembling, but in joyous and loving submission to God’s law and to His exclusive worship. No other power should be acknowledged as worthy of such devotion and loyalty. In fact, there are no other options, because what shows itself on the horizon of the cosmic conflict as possibilities are actions of demonic powers destined to extinction (Revelation 16:13, 14; 17:14; 20:11–15). The fear of the Lord is therefore a positive divine invitation . . . to take God’s side in the cosmic conflict in order to stand before His most glorious presence, filled with joy in eternal fellowship with Him ([Rev.] 21:3–4; [Rev.] 22:3–5).”—Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, “The Closing of the Cosmic Conflict: Role of the Three Angels’ Messages,” unpublished manuscript, p. 27.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 Think about the incredible power of God, the One who created and sustains the entire cosmos. We can barely grasp the idea of the cosmos. How then could we even begin to grasp the Creator of it? Think about how much greater and vaster and more powerful He is than we are. And this God will one day judge us? How do these facts help us understand the idea of the “fear of God” and what it means?
- 2 How can we avoid legalism when we discuss the biblical concepts of holiness, overcoming, and victory? Why must we always understand that it was Christ’s victory for us, at the cross, that alone remains the foundation of our hope of salvation, regardless of our victories (or even failures) here now?
- 3 Why, even with all the promises of victory over sin, do we often find ourselves failing and not living up to the standard of righteousness that Jesus Himself modeled for us and promises us could be ours, as well? What mistakes are we making in not allowing God to do the work in us that He has promised?

## Praying for New Friends

By DMITRY BAGAL

Elena Bagal felt lonely in Kochel, Germany. Born in Siberia, she knew no one when her family arrived, and her German was weak. As the days passed, she missed the life that she had enjoyed in Russia. One day, she cried out to the Lord for a new friend. “I really need a friend to spend time with,” she prayed.

Little did she realize that she was not the only Russian-speaking mother praying for friends. Snezhana had moved to the town a year earlier amid difficult family circumstances. On the same day that Elena prayed for a friend, Snezhana cried out to God, “Lord, I have no more strength! How can I go on living? Help me to meet someone to share my difficulties with.”

Snezhana had two children, ages 7 and 9, but they rarely went to the children’s playground. On that day, however, they went to the playground.

Elena, who had just prayed for a friend, took her baby girl to the same playground. She greeted Snezhana in German, but soon she realized that they both spoke Russian. She couldn’t believe it! She thought that the mother and children were visiting tourists, but it turned out that they lived in the town and were looking for new friends. Their families have become close friends. “God let me meet you so that I would have a friend,” Snezhana told Elena recently. Elena sends encouraging songs and uplifting sermons to Snezhana. She is praying that Snezhana will agree to Bible studies.

After the meeting, Elena kept praying for new friends. One day, she met Natasha, a Russian speaker in need of encouragement. The women became friends, and today Elena regularly sends Bible promises to Natasha.

Elena kept praying for new friends. While shopping, she met Irina, another Russian speaker, and invited her home for a visit. The two women now meet every other week. Sometimes, Elena gives Irina massages and, each time, she prays. The last time she gave a massage, Irina prayed for the first time. Elena has learned that Irina sometimes visited an Adventist church before moving to Kochel. “God’s ways are wonderful!” Elena said.

She prays that Irina will want to study the Bible with her and that she can start a small group for Russian speakers in her home. In the meantime, she keeps praying for new friends. Do you pray for new friends?




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*This mission story illustrates Mission Objective No. 1 of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s “I Will Go” strategic plan: “To revive the concept of worldwide mission and sacrifice for mission as a way of life involving not only pastors but also every church member, young and old, in the joy of witnessing for Christ and making disciples.” For more information, visit [IWillGo2020.org](http://IWillGo2020.org).*



## ***Part I: Overview***

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The three angels' messages comprise, collectively, a divine, heaven-sent message whose purpose is to prepare the world for the second coming of Jesus. These messages are designed by God to have a practical impact on our lives. They reveal Jesus' plan for end-time living. The three angels' messages are much more than theoretical doctrines that have little impact on our lives. Although they carry a solemn warning to the unconverted that cannot be ignored, their major purpose is to draw us closer to Jesus.

This week's lesson focuses on two phrases of the first angel's message: first, the expression "fear God," and second, "give glory to Him." As we shall discover in our study this week, fearing God refers to respect, awe, and wonder at His infinite wisdom, His incredible power, and His amazing grace. Fearing God also is a state of mind, one that is loyal to God. In an age of self-inflated importance, consumerism, and self-centeredness, the first angel calls us to live a God-centered life rather than a self-centered life. Giving glory to God refers to how we live. Giving God glory impacts every area of our lives, from what we eat and drink, to what we take into our minds, and to the places we go. Giving glory to God influences the things we read and what we view on the internet or television.

Our lesson will examine closely these two phrases to discover the impact they have on our lives in the twenty-first century. We will explore together how understanding the gospel of Jesus Christ enables us to both "fear God" and "give glory to Him."

## ***Part II: Commentary***

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To "fear God" means to live a God-centered life. Rather than being restrictive, short-circuiting our joy and limiting our happiness, making God the center of our lives is the very foundation of authentic identity, true purpose, and genuine joy. Jesus clearly links knowing and doing His will with our happiness.

In John 13:17, He states, " 'If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them' " (*NKJV*). A life wrapped up in self is a very small package. Being locked in the prison of our own self-centered behavior is a miserable way to live. Knowing Christ, obeying Christ, and living for something bigger than ourselves brings life's greatest joy. The One who made us has designed us to live, really live, for the delights of His kingdom. Psalm

16:11 puts it this way: “You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (*NKJV*).

*The SDA Bible Commentary* makes this insightful observation regarding the expression “fear God” in Revelation 14:7: “The message to fear God is especially timely in the period represented by the preaching of this angel, for men are worshipping gods of materialism and pleasure and many others of their own devising.”—Volume 7, p. 827.

“A series of studies . . . published in the journal *Motivation and Emotion* [T. Kasser et al., “Changes in Materialism, Changes in Psychological Well-being: Evidence From Three Longitudinal Studies and an Intervention Experiment,” *Motivation and Emotion* 38 (2014), pp. 1-22] showed that as people become more materialistic, their sense of well-being and purpose is reduced and if they become less materialistic, it rises. While materialism is good for the economy, fueling growth, it can have a negative impact on a personal level, leading to anxiety and depression. Consumerism can also damage relationships, communities, and the environment.”—Kirstie Pursey, “How Consumerism and Materialism of Modern Society Make Us Unhappy, Lonely, and Unconfident,” <https://www.learning-mind.com/consumerism-and-materialism-unhappy/>.

The appeal of Revelation 14:7 to “fear God” is an appeal to find our true happiness in doing God’s will. Revelation 14:7 is an appeal to find in Christ our highest delight and deepest joy. When we surrender our lives to Jesus, obedience springs naturally from the heart. Duty becomes a delight and sacrifice for the cause of Christ a pleasure.

Ellen G. White states it this way: “All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 668.

To “give glory” to God means to honor God in our lifestyle. Giving God glory involves the recognition that we are ambassadors for Christ. We are the light of the world—the salt of the earth. The word used for “glory” in Revelation 14:7 is *doxa*. This word is used regularly in the New Testament. It may have two distinct meanings. The first meaning indicates honor, fame, or recognition. In this sense, to give God glory would mean to give Him the honor or recognition He deserves. Rightly so, for He created us. He redeems us. Daily He sustains our lives, and He is coming again for us. At the same time, there is another aspect of the word *doxa* that is often overlooked. In some instances, in the New Testament, *doxa*

can signify brightness or glorious appearance. According to the apostle Paul, the glory of God shone forth in the face of Jesus Christ (*2 Cor. 4:6*). “As this glory of God revealed in Christ shines forth from the gospel into the heart and mind of the believer, it transforms him into ‘light in the Lord’ (*Eph. 5:8*). Thus ‘we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory’ (*2 Cor. 3:18*).”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 503. To embody this twofold meaning, honoring God and guarding His reputation while letting the brightness of His glory shine through our lives, ought to be the goal of each Christian.

This twofold meaning leads us to a few basic questions. Can we give God glory if we fail to care for our bodies? Is it possible to honor God when we are willfully violating His principles of health? What relationship do our physical lifestyle habits have to our spiritual health?

In 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20, the apostle Paul provides an answer to these questions: “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (*NKJV*).

The apostle adds to our understanding of what it means to glorify God: “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (*1 Cor. 10:31, NKJV*). When we surrender our lives to Christ, our bodies become the temple of the Holy Spirit. An unbeliever certainly may become impressed by the Spirit, convicted by the Spirit, and moved by the Spirit, but the Holy Spirit takes up residence in the life of the committed believer. Our bodies become the dwelling place of the Spirit of God. This tenancy is indeed an awesome thought: the Third Person of the Godhead takes residence in the lives of believers. Thus, to defile our bodies and willingly violate the laws of health is to dishonor our Maker. We are Christ’s because He created us and has redeemed us.

There is another reason it is vitally important to God that we give Him glory in our health practices. Spirituality and health are closely aligned. The Holy Spirit communicates with us through the spiritual faculties of our brains. If the brain is nourished by a poor quality of blood because of poor health habits, we will be less capable of discerning the voice of the Holy Spirit. Our understanding of the plan of salvation and Bible truth will be obscured and compromised. If we are destroying our bodies because of our willful neglect of our health, our witness to the world certainly will not be one that gives God glory. This principle applies not only to our health habits but also to the things we watch on television and read in magazines and books, the content that occupies us on the internet, and a host of other lifestyle practices.

To fear God is an invitation to live a God-centered life, giving Him

glory in all that we do. This invitation is the call of the judgment hour, a call that will prepare a people for the coming of Jesus. Through His grace and by His power, we can give glory to Him, honor His name, and shine as lights in this world of darkness. Such a life is our calling and our destiny.

### ***Part III: Life Application***

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**Read and Reflect:** Several years ago, Pastor Mark Finley was helping an older woman quit smoking. They studied the Bible together, counseled, and prayed together, but nothing seemed to work. She just did not have the motivation to quit smoking. In fact, she enjoyed smoking and only half-heartedly desired to quit. One day when Pastor Finley visited this elderly grandmother, she had a big smile on her face and exclaimed, “Pastor Finley, I quit, I quit! I haven’t smoked for a number of days!” Eager to discover what made the change, the pastor asked, “What motivated you?” She simply responded, “My little seven-year-old granddaughter.” She explained, “One evening I was sitting in my favorite chair, smoking away, and my granddaughter climbed up on my lap and said, ‘Grandma, when I get big, I want to smoke just like you.’ That was it, pastor. I quit for her sake.”

If a grandma can quit smoking for her granddaughter’s sake, can we not, by the grace of God and the power of His Spirit, give up any habit not in harmony with His will for Christ’s sake? The devil says that it is impossible to overcome our evil habits and sinful tendencies. Jesus says, “‘To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life. . . . Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life’ ” (*Rev. 2:7–10, NKJV*). Jesus promises us the strength to be victorious in the battle with evil.

#### **Ask your students:**

- 1. How is the message of the three angels both a call to obedience and a call to godly living in this crisis hour of earth’s history?**

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