

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, March 3, 2021 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



REAL McCOY OR REAL DECOY
"Marks of True Faith"
Matthew 7:21-23

²¹ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' ²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' –Matthew 7:21-23 (NKJV)

"Before you can impact the life of another for Christ, you must have been impacted by Christ in a personal and life-changing way" You can't be a world changer if your world hasn't been changed by Him to start with. Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount" actually teaches us how we may impact our world and the lives of those around us for Christ. We have been adding these important keys to impacting your world from Jesus's sermon. Let's review where we've been and add another one in our study as we proceed through Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount." We are now up to **17 important keys to impacting your world...**

17 Important Keys to Impacting Your World: (From the Sermon on the Mount)

1. To impact your world for Christ you must **KNOW CHRIST PERSONALLY** = Matthew 5:1-12, "The Beatitudes"
2. To impact your world for Christ you must **REFLECT CHRIST** to the **WORLD** (others) = Matthew 5:13-16, "Salt and Light"
3. To impact your world for Christ you must **LEARN** to **LIVE** by the **WORD** of God daily = Matthew 5:17-21, "Fulfilling and Living by the Word"
4. To impact your world for Christ you must **RIGHTLY RELATE** to **OTHERS** = Matthew 5:22ff
5. To impact your world for Christ you must **GUARD YOUR HEART** = Matthew 5:27-30
6. To impact your world for Christ you must **BUILD STRONG CHRIST-CENTERED MARRIAGES** and **HOMES** = Matthew 5:31-32

7. To impact your world for Christ you must **LIVE A LIFE OF INTEGRITY** = *Matthew 5:33-48*
8. To impact your world for Christ you must **PRACTICE RADICAL GENEROSITY** = *Matthew 6:1-4*
9. To impact your world for Christ you must **BECOME A MAN OR WOMAN OF DEEP AND FERVENT PRAYER** = *Matthew 6:5:15*
10. To impact your world for Christ you must **GIVE YOURSELF AT TIMES TO THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE OF FASTING** = *Matthew 6:16-18*
11. To impact your world for Christ you must **NOT LET THE THINGS OF THIS WORLD HAVE TOO GREAT AN IMPACT ON US** = *Matthew 6:19-24*
12. To impact your world for Christ you must **GIVE TESTIMONY OF A FAITH BASED, WORRY FREE LIFE** = *Matthew 6:25-34*
13. To impact your world for Christ you must **AVOID A JUDGMENTAL SPIRIT TOWARD OTHERS** = *Matthew 7:1-6*
14. To impact your world for Christ you must **ASK, SEEK AND KNOCK FOR THE POWER AND ABILITY THROUGH CHRIST TO IMPACT YOUR WORLD** = *Matthew 7:7-12*
15. To impact your world for Christ you must **CHOOSE THE RIGHT PATH FOR YOUR LIFE** = *Matthew 7:13-14*
16. To impact your world for Christ you must **BE ABLE TO RECOGNIZE AND BEWARE OF FALSE TEACHERS AND ERROR** = *Matthew 7:15-20*
- ➡ 17. To impact your world for Christ you must **MAKE SURE OF YOUR PROFESSION AND CALLING AS A BELIEVER** = *Matthew 7:21-23*

Isn't that essentially what we have been saying all along in this study... *"Before you can impact the life of another for Christ, you must have been impacted by Christ in a personal and life-changing way"* How can we effectively impact the lives of others around us in this fallen world? Well, you can't if you, yourself haven't chosen the right path. This study is about that path and Jesus invitation to that path.

We have acknowledged throughout this study that trying to impact our fallen world is overwhelming. The short of it is we can't... at least not on our own, not in the flesh, not without the Lord. As we have seen in previous weeks, what Jesus is calling us to is beyond us, outside of us and our ability. But through Him we can.

READ: Matthew 7:21-23

Someone has called this **"the scariest passage/verses in the Bible."**

- *Why do you think that might be ascribed to these verses in Matthew 7:21-23?*
- *What are the implication of these verses for professing believers today? For the church today?*

➡ Pastor, Rick Boyne says, "Every time I come across Matthew 7:21, I am taken back by how scary this verse must be to religious people. By that, I mean people who are desperately trying to get to Heaven by doing good. Or by being good. There are many people who call themselves a

Christian, Follower of Jesus, or Believer, who, quite frankly, are only fooling themselves because they are trying to add something to the Gospel. What are they adding? Their own effort.”

- *Why would this verse/passage (Mt.7:21) be scary to religious people?*
- *Why do you think he means by religious people “desperately trying to get to Heaven by doing good”? Do you see evidence of this? Cite examples.*

➡ In his commentary on this section of scripture, in Matthew 7:21-23, Dr. John McArthur makes this startling statement (I’ve shared this statistic and statement from Dr. John McArthur before), “Various polls in recent years have estimated that perhaps 50% of Americans identify themselves as born-again Christians. But on the basis on the Bible’s description of true believers and the fact that few (Mt. 7:14) really come on God’s terms, those estimates could not be remotely correct. By scriptural standards, it is hard to believe that even half of the church members in the United States are true believers.”

- *Do you see evidence today that 50% of American’s are Christian? Why or why not?*
- *If 50% of American’s identify themselves as Christian what are they basing that on do you think?*
- *What do you think McArthur means by “few really come on God’s terms”? What are God’s terms for salvation?*
- *Do you agree or disagree with this statement overall? Why or why not?*
- *Do you find this statement troubling? Why or why not? And what the implications of this statement be for the church today?*

How can we distinguish true faith from false faith—true believers from false ones?

Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Christ taught about the characteristics of the kingdom of heaven and its citizens.

Some Characteristics of Kingdom Citizens as Seen in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount:

- (1) **They are the poor in spirit** - When the world doesn’t recognize their need for God, true believers do, and they cry out to him for salvation and sanctification (Matt 5:3).
- (2) **They are the mourners** - When the world enjoys and promotes sin, kingdom citizens mourn, are broken and grieve over it (Matt 5:4).
- (3) **They are more than just outwardly righteous** - Unlike the Pharisees and religious leaders who made a show of their religion, their righteousness, and spirituality, true believer... kingdom citizens practice an inward righteousness (Matt 5:20).
- (4) **They pursue this inner righteousness through spiritual disciplines** – Disciplines such as giving, praying, fasting, and confessing sin (Matt 6), each of which Jesus addresses in his Sermon on the Mount.
- (5) **They get rid of sin in their own lives and they help others do the same in order to honor God (Matt 7:1-6) -**

★ In Matthew 7:13-14, Christ began his conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount. He called people to choose between two pathways—the narrow road of the kingdom of heaven which leads to life or the broad road of the world which leads to destruction. By mentioning the narrow road, he describes how hard it is to enter the kingdom of heaven. It is not the path of least resistance—it is the hard road. It is difficult to find and difficult to follow. To compound the difficulty of getting

into the kingdom, Christ shares that there are false prophets who deceive people and keep them off the narrow road (v. 15-20).

Finally, Christ concludes his sermon by describing another common reason people are kept out of the kingdom of heaven—simply self-deception.

3 Things that Keep People out of The Kingdom of Heaven:

- (1) **The way is hard** = Matthew 7:13-14
- (2) **False prophets** = Matthew 7:15-20
- (3) **Self-deception** = Matthew 7:21-23

Yes, some are deceived by false prophets, but others deceive themselves! The reality of false and true believers is reiterated throughout Scripture.

- In Matthew 25:1-12, Christ describes ten virgins—five with oil and five without. When the bridegroom—Christ—returns, the five without oil try to enter the wedding banquet, but Christ says to them, “I don’t know you.”
- Also, in Matthew 25:31-46, at Christ’s return, he will separate the sheep and goats. Both call him Lord, but only the sheep enter into eternal life.
- In Matthew 13, Christ describes the kingdom as wheat and weeds (v. 36-43), good fish and bad ones (v. 47-50)—all representing the reality of true and false believers in the church.

It is because of this reality that Scripture commands Christ’s followers to...

- ***“make their calling and election sure” in 2 Peter 1:10***
- ***And to examine themselves to see if they are truly in the faith in 2 Corinthians 13:5***

Sadly, many have been taught that if they simply said a prayer or professed Christ, they are saved and should never doubt it—they have a flawed view of assurance of salvation. However, there are many who will call Christ Lord in the last days, who have served him in the church—casting out demons and prophesying in his name—who will be excluded from life. They were deceived about their salvation—they really were on the broad road that led to destruction. The kingdom of heaven is truly difficult to enter!

In our passage, in Matthew 7:21-23, Christ describes those who profess Christ as Lord but are excluded from the kingdom. He describes them not only as **self-deceived**, but later also people who built their religious houses on a sandy foundation which eventually will be destroyed at God’s judgment.

In this study, we will consider marks of true faith which distinguish authentic believers from false ones.

A Big Question: What are marks of true faith which distinguish authentic believers from false ones?

MARKS OF TRUE FAITH

In our passage, Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus give us **6 marks of true faith that distinguish authentic believers from false one**, or as we are saying it in our study that distinguish the “real McCoy” for

a “real decoy.” You get it right! Let me give you these 6 marks of true faith, and we will work our way through each.

6 Marks of True Faith (that distinguish the real McCoy from a real decoy):

(1) True Faith Is More than an Orthodox Profession of Christ – Jesus begins by saying in the first part of verse 21, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Observation Question: What are some positive aspects of the false believers’ profession?

Christ describes how there will be some who stand before him on the day of judgment (cf. Matt 25:41) and call him, “Lord, Lord,” but will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Certainly, there is nothing wrong with the profession. Romans 10:13 says, “For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Every true believer calls Christ, “Lord.” The profession is spectacular on many fronts:

- By calling Christ, “Lord,” it was courteous and respectful.
- By calling him “Lord,” it represented orthodox theology, as it probably refers to his deity. The Greek word can simply mean “sir”; however, it was commonly used in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) for the word “Yahweh.”¹ This person knew that Christ was more than a man, he was God.
- The fact that “Lord” is repeated twice means that it was fervent and passionate.
- It also seems to be a public profession, as it was done on the day of judgment. Again, this confession is spectacular.

John Stott said this about the profession, “What better Christian profession could be given? Here are people who call Jesus ‘Lord’ with courtesy, orthodoxy and enthusiasm, in private devotion and in public ministry. What can be wrong with this? In itself nothing. And yet everything is wrong because it is talk without truth, profession without reality. It will not save them on the day of judgment.”²

The problem with this orthodox profession is that it is by itself. Simple belief without an act of the will does not save. James said that even the demons believe there is one God (Jam 2:19)—they are monotheistic and yet are not saved. Demons have orthodox faith but are not part of the kingdom. Sadly, many are raised in the church and have an orthodox profession but are not truly saved. Kent Hughes said this, “All true Christians say, ‘Lord, Lord.’ But not all who say ‘Lord, Lord’ are true Christians! Intellectual orthodoxy does not indicate saving faith. You can be absolutely correct in your belief about Christ’s nature and person, his substitutionary atonement, his resurrection, and his return, you can have even fought against heretics, and yet not be truly saved.”³ What do you think he means by “intellectual orthodoxy” and what is wrong with “intellectual orthodoxy” alone?

¹ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). *Matthew* (p. 477). Chicago: Moody Press.

² Stott, J. R. W., & Stott, J. R. W. (1985). *The message of the Sermon on the mount (Matthew 5-7): Christian counter-culture* (p. 207). Leicester; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

³ Hughes, R. K. (2001). *The sermon on the mount: the message of the kingdom* (p. 255). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

This is important to hear because some think that orthodox belief alone saves. This view is called “Free Grace Theology”—opponents call it “Easy Believism.” They would say one does not need to commit to Christ, be a disciple, or repent of sins in order to be saved. Salvation comes by intellectual belief alone. However, this text, as well as many others would deny this. There is no true salvation without discipleship, taking up one’s cross, and following Christ wholeheartedly (cf. Lk 14:25-33, Acts 2:38). Any other profession is simply a false one.

Application Question: How have you experienced “Easy Believism”—profession without repentance, commitment, and discipleship?

- (2) **True Faith Is More than a Seemingly Successful Ministry** – Look at Jesus’ words in verse 22, “*Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’*”

Interpretation Question: Were the miracles/wonders of these false believers genuine or false?

These false believers also professed many mighty works done in the name of Christ. They prophesied, cast out demons, and did many powerful deeds. Certainly, these professors could have been lying or the works they did could have been done through demonic power—just like Pharaoh’s sorcerers who mimicked Moses. However, what’s interesting is Christ doesn’t rebuke them. He doesn’t declare that their works were dubious or demonically inspired.

This lends to the fact that they were genuine—though the faith of these professors was not. How can this be?

- Certainly, this was true of Judas, who wasn’t truly saved and ultimately betrayed Christ. Christ empowered the disciples, including Judas, to preach the good news, cast out demons, and perform miracles (Matt 10:1-8). Judas performed these works and yet wasn’t truly a believer.
- In John 6:64, Christ said Judas didn’t believe in him.
- And in John 6:70-71, Christ called him a devil.
- However, Christ’s power worked through him.
- Similarly, God anointed Balaam, a prophet of Baal, to bless Israel and give a prophesy about the coming messiah (Num 23).
- Caiaphas, the high priest who helped put Christ to death, also prophesied about Christ’s coming (John 11:51-52).

There is a saying that has been around for many years. I heard my preacher saying it when I was “but a wee lad” myself. The saying is, “**God can hit a straight lick with a crooked stick**” What do you think is meant by this statement? Do you agree or disagree with it? Why or why not?

It must be remembered that performing miracles, giving great messages, and having many converts aren't proof of true salvation. God can empower a donkey to speak for him (Num 22). Christ said that if others don't speak for God, even the rocks will cry out (Lk 19:40).

Empowerment and fruitfulness is not proof of God's favor or salvation.

Sadly, a successful or fervent ministry often becomes a means of assurance for many professing believers. They were raised as pastors' kids or missionaries' kids and have always served the church. However, **service is not proof of salvation**. Even more damaging is that there are many like Judas who have big ministries and well-known Christian names who are not saved.

A successful ministry is not proof of regeneration. The Lord has always used even unbelievers to get his works done. For this reason, maybe it is those who serve in and lead ministries who are most prone to self-deception. Like the Pharisees, they think their study of Scripture and serving others are proof of their eternal life (cf. John 5:39); however, they're not. True faith is more than having a seemingly effective ministry. *Application Question:* Why are those who serve and lead ministries more prone to being self-deceived about their salvation? In what ways have you seen or experienced this?

- (3) **True Faith Is More than Attending Church, Listening to Sermons, and Reading Scripture** - Notice Jesus' words again in verse 22, "*Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast our demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'*" While this verse may have to do with seemingly successful ministries that were prophesying in Jesus name, and casting out demons and performing many wonders in God's name... this very many also be taken to indicate the many good works that some who profess Christ many do and practice and yet they don't truly know Him as Lord and Savior of their life in a genuine, true, and personal way. Jesus will illustrate this further with His story of the wise and foolish builders in verses 24-27 (that we will look at next week).

James, whose epistle many believe is a practical commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, said this in James 1:22, "*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*" What are they deceived about? They are deceived about their faith. It is not genuine. Sadly, there are many like this in the church.

- Scripture says that Herod loved to listen to John the Baptist preach (Mark 6:20), and yet, eventually put him to death.
- No doubt, some who marveled at Christ's words at the end of this sermon (v. 28-29), eventually cried out, "Crucify him!" before his death.

Being a hearer of God's Word is not a proof of salvation. Many love to read the Bible, listen to it preached, and try to understand its mysteries. Who wouldn't want to study the most quoted, translated, and sold book ever? There is no book like it! However, to listen alone does not prove one has saving faith. Yet, the church is filled with people like this every Sunday. Like Judas, they listen intently, but they live very differently throughout the week. They have false faith. It is not genuine. They are deceiving themselves (cf. Jam 1:22).

Application Question: What makes the Bible attractive even to those who aren't truly saved? Why is it so easy to study it and yet not obey it?

- (4) **True Faith Includes a Lifestyle of Obedience to God's Word** – Let's go back to verse 21 again... Jesus said, *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."*

Interpretation Question: How can we reconcile Christ's declaration that only those who do the Father's will enter the kingdom of heaven with Scripture's teaching of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone (Eph. 2:8-9)?

Returning to the first illustration, after Christ declares that an orthodox profession is not enough, he says that only those who do God's will enter heaven.

Does this mean people are saved by their works?

No, Scripture teaches that all are saved by grace through faith, but that true faith produces godly works. Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:8-10, *"⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."*

With that said, Scripture also declares saving faith is an act of obedience to God. John 6:28-29 says, *"Then they said to Him, 'What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent,'"* To believe in Christ is the beginning of obedience to God and the door to true salvation.

You know the words of that great verse we all love to quote, John 3:16, says, *"^{d6} For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*

As mentioned, this belief is more than intellectual. It includes an act of the will—a commitment to follow and obey Christ as Lord. The proof of this belief is a life that continually seeks to obey God's Word. John 8:31 says, *"If you continue to follow my teaching, you are really my disciples."*

Application Question: In what ways is God calling you to grow in studying his Word so you can properly obey him better? What are your major hindrances to obeying God?

- (5) **True Faith Includes a Growing and Abiding Relationship with Christ** – Look at verse 23 there in your Bible... Jesus said, *"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"*

Again, in the first illustration, Christ simply replied to the one with orthodox theology and a spectacular ministry with, “I never knew you.” *“To know”* was a Hebrew idiom used of intimate relations. It was often used in the Old Testament for sexual intimacy (cf. Gen 4:1, 17 in KJV).⁴

Certainly, this one who professed Christ/faith/religion had some knowledge of Christ. Even Judas was Christ’s friend. But Judas, because he never truly repented, didn’t know Christ in a saving manner.

True salvation brings an intimate relationship with God. Christ said, *“This is eternal life, to know God and Christ who God sent”* (John 17:3 paraphrase). In **Romans 8:15**, Paul said that the Spirit of God enables believers to cry *“Abba Father.”*

True salvation creates an intimate relationship with the Lord that will continually grow throughout eternity. In Philippians 3:8-11, Paul said this about his salvation experience... I love this... *“⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, ¹¹ if, by any means, I may attain^[b] to the resurrection from the dead.”* ... My aim is to know him, to experience the power of his resurrection, to share in his sufferings, and to be like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. To Paul, everything was a liability or a loss compared to knowing Christ. He wanted to experience Christ’s power, suffering, death, and resurrection. Paul was consumed with the man he met on the day of his conversion.

It should be the same for us. We will never know him perfectly on this earth, but we should desire to grow in this intimacy with him throughout our lives.

- Moses, who knew God intimately, cried out, “Show me your glory!” (Ex 33:18).
- David, who was a man after God’s own heart, said that he desired God like a deer pants for water (Ps 42:1).

Are you seeking to grow in your knowledge of God?

Did your conversion create an insatiable desire in you to know God and his Word more?

Christ described true believers as those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matt 5:6).

Are you hungering and thirsting to know God more?

***Application Question:* How have you experienced an insatiable desire to grow in intimacy with God? Why do we at times lack a desire to know God more? How is God calling you to cultivate your current desire for him?**

⁴ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). *Matthew* (p. 479). Chicago: Moody Press.

- (6) **True Faith Includes a Life of Repentance—Turning away from Sin** – Look there again at Jesus’ words in verse 23... these are tragic words really, *“And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness’* Next, Christ says to the person with orthodox theology and an impressive spiritual resume, “Go away from me, you lawbreakers!” *“You who practice lawlessness”* can also be translated *“workers of iniquity”* and it is a present indicative verb in the original language—indicating continuous, regular action.⁵

This means that Christ is not simply talking about someone who sins. Every person sins, including true believers. Christ refers to those practicing a lifestyle of unrepentant sin. The very fact that someone who professes Christ fights against their sin, seeks to repent, and continually gets right with God is an assurance of their salvation.

The problem with these professors of Christ/fait is that they lacked that. They lived like the world—a lifestyle of enjoying and probably, at times, promoting sin—not running away from it. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Paul said this, *“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! The sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, passive homosexual partners, practicing homosexuals, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, the verbally abusive, and swindlers will not inherit the kingdom of God. Some of you once lived this way. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”*

Listen, it is not that the righteous don’t struggle with these things, it’s that they don’t live a lifestyle of unrepentant sin. If they struggle with lust or dishonesty, they may fall down, but they won’t stay down. The Spirit inside of them won’t let them stay down.

Proverbs 24:16 says that the righteous person falls seven times but gets back up.

True salvation includes repentance—a turning away from sin to follow Christ in salvation and a continual turning away from sin as we follow him in sanctification. Are you repenting of sin or living in it like the world? A tree is known by its fruit (Matt 7:17-20).

Application Question: In what ways are more liberal views of sin, especially sexual sin, which say that it is acceptable and normal, entering the church? How have you experienced this? How should Christians respond to this reality?

CONCLUSION

The church is full of weeds and wheat, bad fish and good fish, virgins without oil and virgins with oil, and goats and sheep. There will always be those who profess Christ but lack the fruit of the Holy Spirit in their lives. There is no growth in holiness, no fear of God, and no cross in their life. They are on the broad road. They claim a cheap grace instead of a costly grace. They will ultimately be turned away from God on the day of judgment. They were never truly saved.

⁵ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). *Matthew* (p. 479). Chicago: Moody Press.

For this reason, Scripture calls us to make our calling and election sure by growing in Christ and pursuing holiness (2 Peter 1:5-11). We are called to prove our repentance by our good deeds—producing fruits worthy of repentance (Acts 26:20, Matt 3:8). We are called to examine ourselves to see if Christ is really in us (2 Cor 13:5). Is Christ in you? Do you possess marks of true faith?

Application Question: How should people examine the reality of their faith? What are some helpful texts to use (cf. Matt 5:3-10, 1 John, James)? How often have you received teaching on the topic of assurance of salvation (i.e. How to know whether we are truly saved)? Why is having assurance of salvation so important?

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