Jesus' Silence Before Herod
Scripture: Luke 23:7-12
Code: 42-280

In preparation for the Lord's table, let's open the Word of God to Luke chapter 23...Luke chapter 23. We are in the middle of the trials of our Lord Jesus Christ. Friday of Passion Week, Friday the day our Lord Jesus was placed upon the cross, He endured a series of trials. Two phases, one was the trial before the Jews which was a model of injustice. It had three parts, first He was taken to Annas, the former high priest and power behind the priests. Then He was taken to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Council.

Then again in the morning at 5 A.M. just after the sun came up, a repeat performance before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin to legitimize it by having it in the daytime. At that point He was then taken to Pilate cause the Jews wanted Jesus dead, but they didn't want to kill Him, that is the Jewish leaders, the chief priests, the scribes, the Pharisees did not themselves want to kill Jesus. There was just too much danger in doing that because of His popularity. They feared Jesus and they feared the people.

They also wanted to distance themselves from that kind of act, strange as it may seem. And so, they called upon Roman law that was in existence that said that the Jews could not execute anyone. The occupied Romans had taken over the right of execution and the Jews could no longer do it.

And so, after they had tried Jesus and found Him guilty of blasphemy, normally they might just stone Him to death. That was the way they punished blasphemers. They accused Him of blasphemy for saying He's the Son of God and the Messiah, which, of course, is not blasphemy but is true. But to them it is blasphemy.

But unwilling to soil their hands, as it were, by killing Him, they take Him to Pilate. That's how chapter 23 begins. Jesus bound just after five o'clock in the morning, is taken over to the Praetorium where Pilate is and He is brought to Pilate with a view that Pilate will pronounce the death sentence upon Him and He will be executed by the Romans.

In His first phase of the Gentile trial, Pilate meets Jesus, talks with Jesus and renders His verdict. Verse 4, "Pilate said to the chief priests and the multitudes," by now in the morning, the sun is up, the entire Sanhedrin is outside the Praetorium standing in the street very near the temple just really nearby, and the crowd is swelling and swelling around the Sanhedrin as it becomes clear what is going on. You can hear the Sanhedrin shouting their accusations against Jesus. The multitude is

growing and growing.

Pilate comes out, says to the chief priests and the multitudes, “I find no guilt in this man. Not guilty...not guilty.” He repeats this three times. Verse 14, the middle of the verse, “I have found no guilt in this man.” And again, verse 22, “I have found in Him no guilt.” You have three “not guilty” verdicts rendered against Jesus. And the issue is not blasphemy anymore. They came up with a different issue by the time they got Him to Pilate. Pilate would have no interest in executing a man for religious blasphemy. But when they arrived, according to verse 2, they had concocted the idea that He was an anti-Roman insurrectionist, leading a rebellion that was sweeping the nation. “We found this man misleading our nation.” That is amassing them against Rome. “Forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar and saying that He Himself is Christ a king. He is a threat to the Roman power here. He is a threat to the Roman economy because of the tax issue and He is a threat to the throne of Caesar.”

They invent these lies, none of which are even remotely true. They have no evidence, no proof and Pilate three times after examining Jesus says, “Not guilty...not guilty.” So we have seen that first phase.

As it draws to its conclusion, we come down to verse 6. Pilate doesn’t know what to do now because he’s rendered his verdict of not guilty. And in response to that, verse 5 says, “The people kept on insisting that Jesus was an insurrectionist. That His insurrection was country wide, stirring up people all over Judea, starting as far north as Galilee and coming all the way down to Jerusalem. That He is a formidable threat to Roman presence, power and security.

They do not back up one inch when Pilate gives his not guilty verdict. What’s he going to do? Verse 6, he has an idea. “When Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. When he learned that He belonged to Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time.”

Here’s a way out...jurisdiction. This is typical of jurisprudence. You are tried by the authorities in your own region. Jesus was, in fact, a Galilean. The ruler of Galilee was Herod, Herod Antipas, short for Antipatros, after the father, after Herod the Great, one of the sons of Herod the Great. So Pilate has this brainstorm...Hey, if He’s a Galilean, then He ought to be tried in front of the Galilean authority and the ruler of Galilee is none other than Herod who happens to be here because this is Passover and everybody’s here. And Herod would have been staying very near by in the Hasmonaean palace which was his Jerusalem residence. This is perfect. Pilate’s found his out. He’ll send Him to Herod.

Now just who is this Herod? Fascinating character, is he. He’s one of the sons of Herod the Great. Herod the Great was a long ruler in the land of Israel. He died in 4 B.C. And when Herod the Great died, he had planned to divide the Kingdom of Israel up among his sons. One of those sons was Herod Antipas. And to him was given Galilee and Peraea. That was his area to rule.

Now Herod the Great was a very formidable ruler and a sole ruler of the whole land of Israel and Herod the Great was a great builder, as we all know. He built the great Herodian temple which stood until 70 A.D., the temple with which Jesus was so familiar. So after his death, he divides this kingdom up into parts. He gives one part to Herod Antipas, one of his sons who rules there from 4 B.C. to 39 A.D., 43 years this man had a presence there. Since Rome was in control of Israel, no one could accept any kind of appointment without Roman approval. So Herod Antipas, even though he was appointed by his father who was the king, had to go to Rome to have it confirmed. He had lots of friends in Rome, so it wasn't difficult because he was educated in Rome. When he was young, his father, Herod the Great, had sent Herod Antipas to Rome to be educated. Understanding the Romans ruled the world, he wanted his son to have a Roman education.

So, when he went back, he had the connections. He got the affirmation and he was told you will go back and you will be allowed to rule Galilee and Peraea as a client state under the Roman Empire. He becomes the Herod who is most prominent in the New Testament.

He returns to begin his rule in 4 B.C. and the region is in shambles because in the same year, 4 B.C., at the feast of Pentecost in that year, a massive rebellion broke out in that region and they wound up devastating the area, devastating, demolishing properties and cities. So when Herod Antipas came back, he had, first of all, to rebuild Galilee and Peraea, rebuild what had been destroyed. He became a builder. He and his brothers built twelve cities.

Herod started with a city called Sepphoris, you will not find that in the Bible because it's not a city where Jesus went to minister, even though it's four miles from Nazareth, a little north, a little east, Sepphoris. He built that city, it became the largest city in Galilee and it was completed in about 10 A.D. It was a massive undertaking to build Sepphoris and it involved all the craftsmen of the area in this 15 year, or nearly 15 year building enterprise. And since Nazareth is only four miles away, it is very likely that one well-known carpenter in Nazareth by the name of Joseph may well have worked on the city of Sepphoris, he being the husband of Mary, the mother of our Lord.

Later on, Herod built another city called Tiberius. It is that spectacular city that still sits on the western shore about the mid-point of the Sea of Galilee, a wonderful place even today to visit. He named it Tiberius in honor of Tiberius Caesar who had replaced Augustus in 14 A.D. Eventually Tiberius gave its name to the lake and it became known as the Lake of Tiberius where it had been known as the Sea of Galilee.

But as Herod Antipas started to build his city, he realized, it soon became obvious, that in digging out the dirt to put the foundations of this great city which was to be his own city, his palace city and the capital city of Galilee, they found they were building on a very large cemetery. This was no problem to Herod, he just kept building. Dig out the dirt, get rid of the bones, build here.

However, the Jews were horrified because of the prescriptions of the Old Testament, the prohibitions of the Old Testament, the prohibitions against touching a dead body, so they saw the whole thing as unclean.

Now Herod 43 years ruling over essentially Jewish people, and he had decent relationships with them, amiable, because he didn't do things particularly to offend them. For example, when he minted coins for his own empire, his own realm, he never put his image on them because he knew the Romans did that and the Jews saw it as idols and they hated it. So he tried to mitigate the hostilities as much as he could. But in this case he was a builder and he just went on building. As a result, no Jews would live there. So you've got a city and you can't have any people living there.

So he came up with a great idea...free land...free houses. Well you normally would assume that this would appeal to the people. It didn't. He then said, "Tax exemption." That didn't work and the city was completed in all its beauty in 23 A.D. and the people that lived there were Herod and his entourage and foreigners forced migrants, destitute poor people and freed slaves. You could say there was no middle class. Never in Jesus' ministry did He go there...never. Not recorded any time in the New Testament that He ever went there and He was born a few miles away and He ministered in Capernaum a few miles away and He was in and around all the area of Galilee but never there.

Now Herod Antipas married and he married the daughter of Aretas IV who ruled over Nabatea which is the next little kingdom city east which marriage was an alliance marriage designed by Rome to unify the area. Just so that the neighboring kings wouldn't be a threat to you, you had somebody marry their daughter and then that mitigated against the potential of future conflict. So he had a sort of alliance marriage with a neighboring realm of Nabatea, Nabatea and Arabia where Paul went after his conversion, you remember, and he married the daughter of Aretas IV who was the king.

In 29 A.D. Herod Antipas made a trip to Rome and he wanted to go to Rome to visit his half-brother, Herod Philip I. When he went to visit Herod Philip I, he was very little interested in his brother and he became very interested in Herod Philip I's wife. In fact, he became overly interested in her and he had an affair with her. Her name was Herodious. She was not only Herod Philip's wife, she was Herod Philip's niece. And since he was the half brother of Herod Philip, she was his niece. So she was in an incestuous relationship. He had an adulterous and incestuous with her. They decided that it was more expedient for them to marry each other and so they decided to divorce their spouses and marry each other. So that's what happened.

So Herod Antipas comes back from the trip, tells his wife, the daughter of the king of Nabatea and Arabia, "You're out, Herodious is in." It is adultery. It is divorce. It is incest, forbidden by Leviticus 18:6, Leviticus 20:21, and he flaunts it shamelessly, openly, publicly. His wife is not happy. She flees back to Aretas, her father, who is equally not happy. Embarrassed and later comes back with an army

for reprisal against Herod Antipas...very effective one.

So this is Herod Antipas. He is now as the New Testament picks him up, married to his niece whom he committed adultery with and stole from his half-brother. Their sin is open, public and shameless. He now enters the New Testament and here's where he enters...John the Baptist. John the Baptist, that fiery preacher of repentance, a preacher against sin, that herald of the coming Messiah knows about this, everybody knows about it. It is in all the whatever is the Galilean tabloids were, it was in them all. John the Baptist condemns the whole thing, condemns the adultery, condemns the divorce and condemns the incest. And Herod is not happy. This is salt in his wounds and so he has John the Baptist arrested and thrown in prison.

That was not enough for Herodious, his niece/wife, his consort. She doesn't want John in prison, she wants John dead because he's offended her and everybody is listening to John. Remember it says, "And all Judea and Jerusalem went out to hear John." She wants him dead. The story is recorded in Matthew 14, you can read it on your own. She planned a party for Herod Antipas, props a birthday party in Machaerus, a palace in Machaerus which is up in Peraea. It's a big celebration with a lot of eating and a lot of drinking. And her objective is to have John the Baptist killed. Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned, right? She's after John big time, not enough for him to be sitting in a stinking cell somewhere, she wants the man dead.

So, she gets her daughter by another man, not Herod Antipas, who traditionally has the name Salome, to dance before the, shall we say, perhaps inebriated Herod Antipas, certainly weakened. She dances with a view to seducing him. So these are really nice people. You've got an incestuous relationship and the woman drags her daughter from another marriage to seduce her husband. And whatever kind of dance she did, which has become sort of legendary in its fanciful perspectives, it worked. He was so sufficiently seduced by her that he says to her, "I'll give you anything you want, even half my kingdom." Wow, that's pretty far gone. And her mother tells her want to ask for and she says, "I don't want your kingdom, I want John the Baptist's head on a plate." And she got it.

This is the family we're dealing with here...adultery, divorce, incest, seduction, murder, not nice people. How did Herod interact with Jesus? How did he relate to Jesus? Three occasions. One, he heard about Jesus, Matthew 14, Mark 6, Luke 9 all say he heard about Jesus, listen to this, and he thought that Jesus was John the Baptist back from the dead. That's what guilt will do for you. He thought Jesus, because he heard about His miracles and the wonders He was doing, was John the Baptist come back from the dead and he was afraid. In fact, he wanted to see Jesus with a view, if necessary, to killing Him.

The second incident that relates Herod Antipas to Jesus, in the thirteenth chapter of Luke and the 31st to the 33rd verses, some Pharisees came to Jesus who was preaching on His final trip to Jerusalem and they said to Him, "You better get out of this region, You better get out of this area, Herod Antipas

is after You to murder you." That's the second connection.

The third one is here. Jesus is sent by Pilate to Herod Antipas, this wicked, wretched man who was first afraid of Jesus, and then, secondly, wanted Him dead. Now he's got Him in his power. What's he going to do? What's he going to do?

Well let's find out what he's going to do. Verse 7, "When Pilate learned that Jesus was a Galilean and belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time." By the way, this was something that was done commonly, sending people to their jurisdiction. Read Acts 25:23 to 27, it's a fascinating parallel account. I'll just hint at it but it's a very, very interesting account of the similar kind of situation regarding the Apostle Paul. It says in that section of Acts 25 verse 23, if I can find it here, there it is, "And so the next day Agrippa had come together," he was related to Herod Antipas, "with Bernice," by the way, Agrippa and Bernice, you heard of that couple, yes...brother and sister and husband and wife. Nice family, this Herod family. Any way, "The next day when Agrippa had come together with Bernice in great pomp and entered the auditorium accompanied by the commanders and the prominent men of the city at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. Festus said, 'King Agrippa, all you gentlemen here present with us, you behold this man about all the people of the Jews appeal to me...'" now this time the Jews are trying to kill Paul. Same exact scenario, they want Paul dead so they've got Jesus before Agrippa and they want him dead.

But verse 25, "I found that he has committed nothing worthy of death," same thing, not guilty, "and since he himself appealed to the emperor I decided to send him. Yet I have nothing definite about him to write to my Lord, therefore I have brought him before you all and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the investigation has taken place, I may have something to write." This is Festus, one ruler, taking Paul to Agrippa, another ruler, to rule in a case in a different jurisdiction. This is a very typical thing, it's similar, almost parallel situation of the Jews want Paul dead, they take him to Festus, he's not willing to do it, he takes him to Agrippa, etc., etc., etc. This is what they did, they passed them around to try to get the Jews satisfied. Same thing in the case of Jesus.

Back now to Luke 23. So verse 8 says Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus for he had wanted to see Him for a long time. Sure, this goes way back into the early years of Jesus' Galilean ministry. He had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him. Now all of his original fear that Jesus might be John the Baptist back from the dead, all of his desire to kill Jesus to remove His threat, has now descended to nothing but sheer curiosity, sheer curiosity. He's just curious. He wants to see Jesus do a sign, that's a word for a miracle, *semeion*.He's heard about it, people talk about it. Jesus has never been to Tiberius so He's never experienced Him, never seen Him. But he's heard so much. He would like to see one of these miracles, never having seen a miracle. And so he's eager to receive Him from Pilate.

Verse 9 says, “He questioned Him at some length. But He answered him nothing.” Jesus never said a word to him, not a word. It’s still, now remember, five o’clock in the morning, just after day break. This is all happening in just very, very few minutes. He stands there silent like a lamb, or like a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth, Isaiah 53:7. He had been silent before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin till finally He had to speak because they placed Him under oath to God to answer back in chapter 22 verse 67. He only answered when they obligated Him by an oath to God to answer, otherwise He said nothing in His own defense, which was shocking to these adjudicators because every prisoner protested and cried out of his innocence, surely if he was really innocent he would. Jesus says nothing. This is shocking behavior because He should be defending Himself. It’s also shocking behavior because it’s a terrible, terrible affront to a man to whom everyone bows to say nothing when he asks you questions. Jesus just stands there and this man who sees himself as the dominant power and authority asking Jesus questions that He doesn’t even answer. And one would not be surprised if this so rankled egotistical maniac that he might have desired to kill Jesus just for the sheer vengeance of it against one who would not even recognize his existence or his questions or his authority.

But it’s amazing. Jesus does not defend Himself. He doesn’t cry out about His innocence. Nor does He even answer this man with ultimate supreme authority. But his view of Jesus at this point is that this man is nothing like I heard about. Remember now, He’s been up all night, Jesus has, through these ridiculous trials. They’ve spit all over His face. They’ve punched Him in the face. They’ve abused Him from three in the morning till five in the morning, keeping Him awake and subjecting Him to abuse. Spit and blood matting His hair, His eyes sunken, His face bruised from the blows, swollen, He really doesn’t look like a revolutionary. He’s bound, where’s His army? Where’s His weapon? Is this a joke? Is this the Jesus that I heard about?

Jesus never says a word. Verse 9 says, “He answered nothing.” Verse 10 says, “And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there accusing Him vehemently.” They’re just screaming His accusations from back in verse 2, that He is leading the whole nation in an insurrection, that He is forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar and that He is a rival to the emperor as a King. Anybody who was a real judge would have said, “Order in the court,” slapped his gavel down and said either you’ll be quiet or you’ll be exited out the door. But they’re just screaming vehemently. Herod has seen no evidence, heard no evidence, heard no testimony, had no proof of any criminal act on the part of Jesus. But he’s sure of one thing, this man is no threat, this man is no insurrectionist, this man is no revolutionary, this man is no miracle worker. He’s looking at a man who looks like a nobody, to be sure.

In fact, the whole thing is so ridiculous, so ludicrous, it’s a joke. And they treat it that way. Verse 11, “And Herod, with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate.” Herod and his soldiers, those would be his personal

body guards. Jesus a threat to Rome? Ha, are you kidding? A threat to Pilate? A threat to me? Ludicrous. So he joins the scorn of the council, playing a little politics here, as he was want to do, remember, the coins he wouldn't put his face on because he wanted good relations with the Jews, he'll play their little game, he has nothing at stake. This is a joke. He'll play their little game. So he, along with his soldiers, he taking the lead, treats Him with contempt. And again, treating Him with contempt implies exactly what happened back in verses 63 to 65 of the prior chapter, they were mocking Him and beating Him, blindfolding Him, you'll remember, prophesy who's the one who hit You? Saying many other things against Him, blaspheming, just more of the same. Mocking Him, treating Him with scorn, treating Him with ridicule.

And then they dressed Him in a gorgeous robe, the word "gorgeous" is *lampros*, actually means brilliant, shiny, bright. Jewish kings wore white robes very frequently, this must have been one of these white robes. In fact, Agrippa who is later one of the Herods, had one, they said, that was woven with threads of silver so that in the sun it just glistened. So Herod lets them use one of his robes and they throw this robe on Jesus as a mockery of the idea that He is a King. And they had their fun with Jesus. Herod led that, followed by his body guard. And then they sent Him back to Pilate.

And with what decision? Go down to verse 15...well, actually back to verse 14 where Pilate says, "I found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you made against Him." And then verse 15, "No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us and behold, nothing deserving death has been done by Him." What was Herod's verdict? Not guilty...not guilty, there's no crime, there's no evidence, there's no proof. There's no testimony. There's no witness. Not guilty...not guilty.

And then this very strange verse 12. "Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day, for before they had been at enmity with each other." A friendship built around the mistreatment of Jesus...a friendship built around a common hatred for the intimidating Jews that they had to acquiesce to. What a sorted friendship. Perfect friendship for sorted characters.

By the way, a little background. They had been at enmity with each other, there were maybe a lot of reasons for that, we don't know. But there's a couple of things we do know. According to Luke 13:1, some Galileans came into the temple to worship and Pilate's men went into the temple while they were worshiping and sliced them up. That incident of slaughtering Galileans in the temple may have come back to the ruler of Galilee, which was Herod, and that was done by Pilate.

But there was another issue that was perhaps more an issue in this enmity. Philo, the historian, records that Pilate had some shields and he demanded that these shields representing Roman power and Roman honor be hung up in Herod's palace.

Now remember, Herod had an aversion to anything idolatrous because it simply confounded his situation with the Jews which he tried to keep as amiable as possible. But Pilate who had the greater

authority required these shields to be held...to be hung, literally, in open places in Herod's palace.

On the shield was the name of the person dedicating the shield and the one to whom the shield was dedicated was emblazoned upon the shields. So to the Jews, it was an idol, it was an image. The Jews were furious. They were mad and they were mad at Herod. And Herod was angry at Pilate for forcing him to hang the shields in his palace.

Herod wanted relief, so Herod sent a message to Tiberius Caesar. Now remember, he had dedicated the city to Tiberius so they were in fairly good standing. Tiberius was angered. Tiberius sent the message back to Pilate, "Get the shields out of Herod's palace and put them in a pagan temple in Caesarea, down at the coast." Which is exactly what Pilate did. So Pilate is openly, publicly humiliated by Herod and Herod goes to Caesar against Pilate. That's why they weren't real good buddies. But they became friends over common contempt for Jesus and a common contempt for the relentless Jews who pinned them back on the issue of executing an innocent man.

Now why does the Bible even bother with telling us about Herod here? Why did this even play into the story? First of all, from Pilate's viewpoint, he sent him to Herod to confirm the verdict. I think he sent him to Herod to confirm the verdict, because that's what he says in verse 14, "I find no guilt in Him, nor has Herod." From Pilate's viewpoint, he wanted confirmation and he got it. From Christ's viewpoint, it confirms His innocence. It confirms Pilate's verdict. It confirms Christ's innocence. Because the guilt and innocence of anyone is to be confirmed in the mouth of two witnesses, Deuteronomy 19:15. Here's the two witnesses, Pilate, "Not guilty." Herod, "Not guilty." Two witnesses. From God's viewpoint, it confirms the Scripture. Acts 4, this is amazing, verse 25 quotes from Psalm 2, and part of Psalm 2 comes in verse 26, "The kings of the earth took their stand. The rulers were gathered against the Lord and against His Christ. The kings of the earth, the rulers are gathered against the Lord and against His Christ. That's the prophecy in Psalm 2:2.

Listen to verse 27, Acts 4, "For truly in this city, Jerusalem, there were gathered against Thy holy servant, Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate." That's the fulfillment. Kings and rulers gathered against Christ, prophesied in Psalm 2, fulfilled in the trial of Jesus and yet they were doing whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur. From Pilate's view, going to Herod confirmed the verdict. From Christ's view, going to Herod confirmed His innocence in the mouth of two witnesses. From God's view, being sent to Herod confirms the prophecy of Scripture. It wasn't incidental. But again we see it's the Jewish leaders who want Jesus dead. They pursue their cause with results. They will not stop until they are satisfied. They will mount their cause again on Pilate, starting in verse 13, when he reconvenes the court and renders the final sentence. We'll see that next week.

The life of Herod Agrippa is a supreme tragedy. A few years after this, the brother of Herodious, the brother of his own wife turned on him, accused him of treason to Caligula, the new emperor. Caligula

bought the unsubstantiated charges, took all Herod's power away, took all his money away, took all his territory away and gave it to Herodious' brother, Agrippa. Sent Herod into exile. Herodious went with him into exile. And there he either died, or as some historians have said, Caligula had him killed. What a monumental waste...what a monumental waste. Face-to-face with the Son of God, face-to-face with the Creator of the universe, face-to-face with the Savior and Redeemer of sinners, what a waste.

Judas, Annas, Caiaphas, the Sanhedrin, Pilate, Herod, they're all monumental tragedies. Face-to-face with Christ, never asked the right question, never received the gift of forgiveness and eternal life which Christ provides.

What about You, because you've come face-to-face with Christ as well this morning? And we will again as we come to His table. All this took Him to the cross. And while it was injustice from the human viewpoint, it was divine justice that took Him there. While it was hate from the viewpoint, it was love from the divine viewpoint that took Him there. God overturned everything. While it was the worst that men could do, it was the best that God could do. While it was injustice on men's part, it was pure justice on God's part. And always, we're coming to the cross...to the cross. And it is this message of the cross we believe and are saved by it, it is this message of the cross that we want to take to the ends of the earth until Jesus comes. It is this message, this glory of the cross, Christ dying for our sins that we might be forgiven that we celebrate.

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