See God’s Glory In His Church

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Preacher: J.D. Edwards

[0:00] Our sermon passage today is in Ephesians, the last four verses of chapter 2.! Ephesians chapter 2, starting at verse 19.!

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building being fitted together grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.
The word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God. Please be seated. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord stands forever.
Let's pray. O Lord, your word is so pure. Your word is so rich.
The depths of your revelation and all of Scripture, Father. Are inexhaustible. We pray, Lord, that your Holy Spirit will pull those truths that your people here in this body today need to hear.
[1:57] We pray, Lord, that you'll strengthen your gift of faith in us. Give us a greater measure of faith. I pray that for each one, Lord, that you love.

That by faith you'll cause us to behold your glory and the great plan of salvation, especially for us, your church.
We pray this for Christ's sake alone. Amen. There are big moments in time.
Like lines in the sand. Like a cut down a timeline. That mark massive changes in our lives.
Think of some of those for yourselves. One moment, you're single. For those of you who are married. The next moment, it's been declared.
[2:55] You are married. For you children, one moment, you're an only child. This is the only world you know.

The next moment, you're a sibling. You're a big brother or a big sister. A handful of us, you need to get to know one another better to know who these are.
A handful of us in our congregation, at one point in their lives, did not have at least one of their parents. A declaration was made.
From that marker in time on, you are now an adoptive child. For some of us, one moment, you're incarcerated.
You're behind bars. And then something is declared. The bars slide open. You step out. Get some sunlight.
[3:54] And you're now a free man. Think of the shock. When something that big changes, a lot of times we can hardly believe it.

Some of you served in the military. And you've told me this. Pastor Chris Peterson, three-time Marie veteran, said this often still. You still forget that you're not in a war zone.
You're at peace. You're at home. But it's such a massive change. You forget. And isn't God so kind, so fatherly, to not only make the initial declaration, but then to minister healing over and over to us, his people.
Spiritually, we have a marker in time. And that's how our passage today begins. Look at verse 19. In my English translation, it starts with these two words.
Now, therefore, there is a declaration. See the timeline of your life. And I encourage you, think back for you.
[5:00] When this truth was accepted and realized and appreciated deeply. And verse 17 explains this. Now, therefore, for each of us.

Look back at 17. Jesus Christ, he came to you. And he came to me. And Jesus Christ, the good shepherd whose voice you heard, he preached peace to you.

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And he preached peace to me. Peace to you who were far off and peace to you who were near. We can relate to this.
Each one of us here has a very different background. Whether your parents were Jews or Gentiles, Christ came and preached peace to you. Whether you were Brazilian or Korean.
Whether you were Brazilian or Korean, Dutch or Mexican. Whether your parents were Christian or heartbreakingly far away from God. Whether you were homeschooled or a high school dropout.
[5:59] It all changed when Jesus Christ came and preached peace to you. Through Jesus Christ, you and I now have access with all the church by the one spirit of God.

The spirit of the father, the son and the Holy Spirit who unites us to God. That's what's our declaration. That's the moment in time, the marker. But some of us need to be reminded of this great reality.
So we rest in it. So it reassures us. So it heals us. And that's what our passage does next. Now therefore. Now therefore. See what you are part of.
Appreciate this. Rest in this. The sermon title today is just that. See the glory of God in his church. See the glory of God in his church. That's what comes next for you. And I think Paul gives us four different images that are all related. And they all are allusions to other parts of scripture reinforced by both the apostles of the new covenant and the prophets of all the Old Testament.
[7:07] Here are those four pictures, starting with the first one. Number one, see the glory of God in his church where he makes foreigners citizens of his kingdom.

That's the first imagery we get. Citizens God makes out of foreigners by bringing you into his kingdom. See the glory of God in his church where he makes foreigners citizens of his kingdom. Verse 19 says, now, therefore, you church are no longer foreigners. Now he gives two things you're not and two things you are. I'm going to take them half at a time. First of all, you are no longer foreigners.
What's the opposite? You are citizens with the saints. Citizens with the saints. Now, before I rush on to press this as assurance.
At least statistically, because no one knows one another's heart. At least statistically, some here in this room today are still foreigners to the kingdom of heaven.
[8:16] Some here are still. In the world. Still outside of the kingdom of God. This very simple illustration helps me to picture it so clearly that there is there is a borderline.

There's a marker between two kingdoms. On one side, misery, oppression, guilt, shame, condemnation, fear, hatred.
That's the domain of the world. This is the realm of darkness over which the prince of the power of the air terrorizes anyone who is stuck on that side.
But on the other side of this line, this border, is the kingdom of heaven. A land of safety, of abundance, of grace, of light, and of true joy.
And there's only one way across from the domain of the devil and darkness of the world into the kingdom of heaven. There's only one way. And Jesus said in John 10, 9, I am the door.
[9:25] If anyone enters by me, he will be saved. So do not remain in the domain of darkness. If Jesus gives you ears to hear his lovely voice, go to him.

Enter life by Jesus. And brothers and sisters, some of you might be trying to fool yourself that you have one foot in each camp.
Or you're so uncertain because this world keeps pulling you. And you're confused. Am I of the world or am I of the kingdom of Christ? And it's one or the other.
Jesus says, if you don't follow me, you hate me. You are either vitally joined to a local church or you are in the world. Non-believers belong to the world.
Believers belong to the kingdom of heaven. They belong to the expression of the kingdom of heaven on earth, which is local churches. Under the rule of Jesus Christ.
[10:35] He says, if you have been transferred, been translated, been brought over, you've entered through Jesus Christ. You belong into the realm of heaven. You are fellow citizens.

You are owned by the kingdom of Christ. You are a fellow citizen. And no one can revoke your citizenship. We sing, let the nations be glad.
Let the peoples rejoice for salvation belongs to our God. We enter in from all the nations into the kingdom of heaven. And we are fellow citizens. We are saved in Christ.

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That's the only time in all the New Testament this word is used. Fellow citizens. It's a special word we're to focus on. Pay attention here. It means equal members, co-nationals, joint countrymen.
If you belong to Christ in his church, you all have the same shared rights within the commonwealth of his kingdom. See, God has a people.
[11:41] The whole world is not God's people. The people of God he calls saints. You are fellow citizens with the saints, with the people of God.

Saints means that you are set apart, sanctified, made holy, recreated in Christ Jesus. You are part of this one new mankind.
You live for God's purposes now. If you are in Christ, you are a saint. We got to celebrate something we all enjoy very much.
And every single time someone says how moving and encouraging it is to receive a member into a local church. The name for church in Greek is ekklesia.
Ekklesia. Hear that sound? And it means called out ones. That same prefix we have in the English words excavate and extract.
[12:37] So ekklesia, it's those who have been called out, extracted from the world. To be a Christian is to be claimed from out of the world, called into the kingdom of heaven by Jesus Christ himself.

And this is affirmed by Christ, the head over every local church that loves him and is ruled by him through his word. Jesus Christ gives his own solemn authority in the joy.
He shares this joy with local churches of recognizing and affirming those who belong to him. You and I get to marvel every time a former foreigner is now baptized as a believer and we get to declare as a congregation.
Here's one that Christ Jesus has called out of the world. Here is a fellow citizen of the kingdom of heaven by his grace and for his glory.
That wonderful hymn we just sang affirms this. How elect from every nation, yet one or all the earth, her charter of salvation, one Lord, one faith, one birth, one holy name.
[13:54] She, the church, the church, partake in one holy food here at the Lord's table to one hope she presses with every grace endued.

See the glory of God in his church where he makes foreigners citizens of his kingdom. Here's the second picture. See the glory of God in his church where he makes strangers members of his household.
See the glory of God in his church where he makes strangers members of his household. Look at all of verse 19. Now, therefore, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but not only fellow citizens with the saints, also members of the household of God.
You are no longer strangers, but members of the household of God. I was reminded, and I think this whole passage points to the importance of the setting of the church in Ephesus and some of the troubles that aren't given clearly.
We can we can infer some of this, that they were probably carrying on some of their their practices and some of their attitudes toward one another within the church from from being mixed of Jew and Gentile.
[15:22] And how a church came to be in a city like Ephesus. We are told in Acts 19, verse eight, how Paul would show up to a big city like that. And in Ephesus, he began preaching and revealing Christ to them from the scriptures in a synagogue, a synagogue.

I haven't explained this to us before. What is a synagogue? Well, these these Jewish descendants were now expatriates. They're scattered all throughout the Roman Empire.
They would still have to go back on pilgrimage to Jerusalem once a year. But while they're away from Jerusalem, they would have a synagogue not to perform sacrifices and use the ceremonial law, though there were rules of cleanliness.
But a synagogue was more like a community center run by the Jewish community where they would read from the Old Testament. And there were God fearers, you know, so these were Gentiles who would show up in these synagogues.
And they were allowed to be there listening, but they had to stay in the back. They could never have any kind of role of actually belonging. They're just considered God fears.
[16:34] Let him be there hearing the Old Testament and praying. And by God's grace, when Paul would show up and read from the Old Testament and say, Jesus Christ fulfills the Old Testament.

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They received by faith both from the Jews, some of them, not all, and the Gentiles that were there, some but not all.

And so those believers in Christ then became the church. That's how they began. Again, as as Paul would travel, he would show up with his band of brothers and there was men from churches exactly like that.
Titus was half Jew, half Gentile. I'm sorry. Timothy was half Jew, half Gentile. Titus was fully Jew, fully Gentile. We're told in Galatians 2, 3 that Titus remained uncircumcised.
So as Paul would show up and minister, Titus and others would have to stay in the back of these synagogues. And some of those practices would have continued on. Paul would have had to watch brothers like Titus be treated as strangers and outsiders by those rulers of synagogues until the Holy Spirit did a new work and gave a new love.
And through new revelation, binding now the church under Christ, not under old covenant regulations. And I believe this emphasis here again is is to help them accept what is true.
[17:58] God has declared it. But now believe this and live it out. Let the spirit work this into your life as a church. The church is not the synagogue.

The church is not a social gathering. It's not a club. It's not a place that's following man-made rules. The church is ordered under Jesus Christ and it's different.
It's otherworldly. And the Lord Jesus Christ, dear believer, the same thing remains true today. You are no longer strangers. From the moment you are engrafted into our Lord Jesus Christ, from the instant that your adoption is final, you are sealed immediately and believing you're sealed by the Holy Spirit.
And the church is officially your forever home. You are a member in the household of God. Notice how it's the household, not of that community, not of that location.
It's the household of God himself. He's the possessive owner. God originated this family. He purchased this family with the blood of his own son.
[19:10] God superintends his family by his own providence. Our Lord Jesus Christ did not shed his blood just to give you and me this visitor pass.

But you're always a stranger. You're always on the outside. It's not like a hotel. You know, you can use the key card anytime after 4 p.m. as long as you're out by 11. You belong.
You're a member. You're at home in the church. Our Lord Jesus Christ died so that God would become your father.
Our Lord Jesus Christ rose again, ascended, and ministers in order to send his Holy Spirit to realize and comfort you of your adoption, to allow you by the Spirit to be healed and to cry out, Abba, Father.
You're not a stranger to God. You're not a stranger to Jesus Christ. And you should never be treated like a stranger by his family, by the church. You are a member of his household.
[20:14] The brothers and sisters beside you, he calls saints. And he calls your family. Our Father so tender is calling us home.

He welcomes the weakest, the vilest, the poor. Our sins, they are many. His mercy is more. Praise the Lord. His mercy abounds to his children.
You and I are no longer strangers to his grace. We are members with all the rights, benefits, and the security of being Christ's own family. See the glory of God in his church where he makes strangers members of his household.
Those are the first two pictures. A kingdom. A household. And now number three, we see the glory of God in his church built by his word upon the chief cornerstone.
The next picture here we could say is a construction site. We've had a lot of construction around here, haven't we? Everywhere you drive, you see some new construction site. There was one going on downtown and you couldn't tell for a long time what it was.
[21:29] You could see the foundation, kind of the blueprint where it would be. And a few pipes starting to stick up. But we're very curious, what shape is it going to take? And that's all we get initially here.

We're given in verse 20 this image. Notice how Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone.
The first pieces are in place and the images of a construction site beginning. Notice how Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone.

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I'm reminded when Jesus made these claims, it's fulfilling what the prophets of old had said. Jesus told Peter upon your statement of the gospel, I will build my church.
Jesus says, I will build my church. It's his church and he alone will build it. It's a good encouragement that the church is not built by a dominant personality.
[22:34] The church is not built by CEO style five year plans. The church is not built even by committees. The church of Jesus Christ is built by Christ himself, whose church it is.

And then how does Christ do this? Verse 20 tells us, he says, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. So he builds his church upon the scriptures, upon the words of the Bible being ministered to the people.
This is how he builds it. I believe apostles and prophets here is a shorthand for all of scripture. The historic confessions take it that way.
It's interesting that apostles are listed first. You know, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. Being the one who is is set.
The angle is perfect. The position, the placement is never going to be a different foundation. It's Christ, his one life. And the apostles, those who who speak as official spokesmen for Jesus Christ himself, the the authorities over which the churches are planted.
[23:46] The New Testament scriptures are revealed and set down to pen and preserved them by the spirit. This is what the apostles brought showing who Jesus is and what he has done by the work of the spirit carrying on his ministry.

Now from heaven through his church, the foundation being their ministry. And it's not a different God, not a different cornerstone than what God has done all along. Our scripture readings today were Psalm 118, a prophet from the Old Testament.
And it was Isaiah 8. We could pull in Isaiah 28. We could pull in Daniel where there's this this stone that comes and topples over everything else. And God grows into a great mountain. Christ fulfills all of this from the prophets as well.
It's one cornerstone. We're told in by the pen of Peter that it was it was Jesus Christ and the spirit of Christ in those Old Testament prophets through whom this revelation and these prophecies were given for the benefit of this great mountain, this great kingdom, this church that the Lord is building by the ministry of his word.
This church is not built upon service projects. The church is not built upon activities to keep everyone busy serving. The church is not built upon programs.
[25:06] The church is not built upon hype. The church is not built upon empty emotion. The church is built upon this one foundation. Look at verse 20 for yourself in your own Bible.

Having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. It's the ministry of the word aligned to the cornerstone that the Lord uses to build his people, his church.
The region of Ephesus. I learned this week it was plagued by earthquakes. We have spots in America like that susceptible to earthquakes and the civil engineering of those places is different. The requirements are different. The standards, the insurance is different if there's earthquakes. Well, Ephesus would have been an ancient counterpoint to that. And so think of how they managed to build the temple of Artemis, Diana of the Ephesians.
These engineers and architects in the ancient world first chose a location that that would absorb some of the shock. It was a marshland. So it means it's a land that has a lot of water into the soil.
[26:21] And that would absorb some of the shock in the case of an earthquake. And they put down first some layers of padding like like straw and other materials that help to, again, absorb that if an earthquake were to come.

And then they began with a foundation. The foundation had to be wide enough to sustain a very massive structure in a place that would be easy to top over.
And at the time that Paul wrote this letter, if we were to travel there, we would look at the skyline pictured as sunset where you can see the buildings of ancient Ephesus. It would have been dominated by this one massive building, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.
The temple to Diana. It was built entirely out of marble. It was three times the size of the Parthenon in Athens. It was took up about the size of an 11 v 11 soccer field or a football field.
The facade. So like the main entrance rose about 80 feet into the air and all around it were 127 columns. It was a towering accomplishment that they built.

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[27:29] In the ancient world, the big size of it would have signaled to everyone dominance, power and permanence. Don't mess with Diana of the Ephesians.

In an ancient structure like that, the cornerstone was the most vital piece for the entire building. The cornerstone would have been the largest piece of block of stone or marble.
It would have had to have been very carefully and perfectly hewn or cut out of the quarry. And then they would situate it on the main corner as the foundation.
As you begin laying the rest of the foundation upon which the building would set. Every angle had to be measured by the cornerstone. Every line had to be squared up perfectly to it.
Roman cornerstones also often had a seal on them like a big placard. And it stated the building's owner and who the chief architect was, who gets credit for this magnificent construction.
[28:35] Notice Paul's words, perfect words here. By the inspiration of the spirit. You have been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone of the church.

The church is Jesus Christ's construction site. Jesus Christ himself is the chief cornerstone. His name claims the whole thing.
He's the chief architect. He gets all the glory for his church. All the rest of the foundation has to be aligned to Christ. In 1 Corinthians 3.11, we read that no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
You see what this means? When we read the Bible, when we read the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ himself is the standard by which we align our interpretation of them.
How we make sense of God's word, the meaning that God is speaking to his people must begin with Jesus Christ. Christ clarifies what the apostles and the prophets put down.
[29:53] Every New Testament book was written by a representative of Christ himself carrying along his words by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, breathing them out.

Today, if you visit an open air tourist site in Turkey in this part of the world, you'll see this basically like a swampland. This marshy field.
And there's one solitary pillar left out of all of those. And even that pillar had to be put back together from fragments. This temple to Diana was invaded, toppled over, destroyed, pillaged.
All the valuable parts were carried off. Earthly empires crumble. And their greatest monuments turn to dust. But the church of Jesus Christ stands forever.
However, we have the massive cornerstone of Christ himself. We have an unshakable foundation. It's built up by God's grace.
[31:00] Every person he draws into his kingdom. And it stands upon Christ alone. All of this world is coming to an end soon.

And it feels week by week it's sooner and sooner. When this earth melts away, the glory of God and his church will stand still.
When God rolls back the heavens, his church will stand still. Because Jesus Christ is our cornerstone. Jesus Christ will never sink.
Jesus Christ will never crack. We have a sure foundation. And it will never be moved. The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ, her Lord.
She is his new creation by water and the word. From heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride. With his own blood he bought her.
[31:57] And for her life he died. For the church he still lives. And he will not fail. He will build his church. See the glory of God and his church built by his word upon the chief cornerstone.

Well here's the fourth and final picture for today. See the glory of God and his church where he fits us together into his holy dwelling.
See the glory of God and his church where he fits us together into his holy dwelling. Look at verse 21 and 22. In whom?
In Jesus Christ. The whole building being fitted together grows. What does it grow into? Remember it was just a construction site initially.
And now this architectural metaphor reaches its full extension. The picture is fully opened up. The big reveal is now set before our eyes.
[33:05] Being fitted together the church grows into a holy temple in the Lord. Verse 22. In whom you also are being built up together for a dwelling place of God in the spirit.

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What a glorious image. The construction site takes the shape of a temple. The Gentiles likely thought of the temple of Diana.
The Jews likely thought of their pilgrimages to Jerusalem and thought of the temple that stood in Jerusalem on Zion. And he says there is a third temple you need to put your eyes on by faith.
And it's the temple of heaven. It's the dwelling place of God that he has brought down to earth. And his dwelling abiding presence now rests.
For those that would think of their pilgrimage to Jerusalem. And for those who had sat in the synagogues and heard the reading of these Old Testament prophets. They wouldn't be able to help but bring to mind images and descriptions of Solomon's great temple.
[34:17] That they all longed for. In 1 Kings 6-7 we read that the house when it was being built was built with one stone at a time.

Prepared at the quarry. Far away from the final site where it would be. So that neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron was heard in the house while it was being built.
Never heard from all my studies any other construction site being put together that way. You go to watch the temple in Jerusalem put together at the peak of glory.
And you don't hear a single sound. A silent construction site. The work of preparation is done far away. And it's put together complete.
Perfect. Silently. Isn't that how the Lord loves to work? Silently building. Silently preparing. Picture one stone at a time.
[35:21] Shaped and smoothed over there at the quarry. The Lord is doing that in this great temple. It will be perfected. We'll see that the new heavens, the new earth, the temple of heaven.

All those elect in Christ united to him. Dwelling, abiding with God, the heavenly temple on earth. Each one of us being prepared, being fitted together.
Being built up in Christ. God is doing that now in our lives. Some of you, he's chiseling away, sanctifying through difficulties in relationships.
Others, it's through difficulties with your body. It's situations. It's problems. It's questions we have with provision. How is the Lord going to see me through this again?
And through all these trials, the Lord is preparing you. He's fitting each one. He's doing this work to build up his glorious temple. He's the craftsman.
[36:24] His good hand never slips. He's smoothing off our rough edges. When we get to see him bring in another living stone and add them to the body. It's another block right next to me.

His building is growing. Each one of us here that God has put together, you praise the Lord and we pray for each other that way. The Lord is shaping my brother, my sister to be fitted into this holy temple for his own dwelling.
And he's doing that with one another together, fitting us together. This word fitting together is how they would prepare a stone, making the edges perfect, presentable.
And a building can be put together with these fitted stones without needing mortar or glue. They perfectly slide and lock and link up, well aligned to the cornerstone because God himself is silently doing the work.
And the purpose of this temple, it's not even for the comfort of the worshipers. It's not for their own experience inside the temple. It's for God's own dwelling. You see that it's you are prepared for a dwelling place of God in the spirit.
[37:40] That's why God's working in your life and in mine. It's for his own dwelling in us. This word for a temple or a sanctuary. It's the holy of holies where worshipers weren't even allowed in there.

Who is it that that fills up the sanctuary of the temple? It's God himself. This is the image that we are the sanctuary. We are being prepared for God's good, for God's glory, for his filling.
A dwelling place means a settled home, not a temporary booth, not a tent in passing, but a permanent residence.
And that's what God calls his church. When we gather in his name, we are the place where he descends in glory and fills our space with his very presence.
In 2 Corinthians 6, 18, Solomon prayed, Lord, we have this temple, but God, how could you dwell on earth with man?
[38:43] Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, how much less the house that I have built. We know that God cannot be contained. Yet in Jesus Christ, God says, I have come.

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I have become flesh and dwelt among my people. John, one of the apostles testifies, we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten of the father, full of grace and truth.
Jesus Christ brought the presence of God himself in his flesh to communion with his people. And those in the presence of Christ spiritually, truly dwell with God through Christ.
Jesus Christ is the head of his church. His church is his body. His church is the temple of God. God's home on earth is right here with you and me, his church.
Brothers and sisters, when we are gathered here in the name of Jesus, we're not in a gym. We are a sanctuary.
[39:48] You, Reformed Heritage Church, you are the house of the living God. You get to experience the presence of God dwelling in you, abiding with you, residing with you.

We are his beloved church where he loves to display his glory. Mid toil and tribulation and the tumult of the church's war, the church waits the consummation of peace forevermore.
Till with that vision glorious, our longing eyes are blessed. And the great church victorious shall one day be the church at rest.
Yet she on earth has union with God, the three in one. So we pray, Lord, give us grace that we in Christ now and at consummation shall dwell with thee as one.
Praise the Lord for this great union we have with the holy living God who dwells with us. The stone Jesus Christ cut to become our sanctuary, our place of refuge.
[41:00] Let's pray. Lord, we thank you that you've allowed us to know you, to experience your glory, that we can see in Christ the full construction, the temple that you've raised up for your dwelling place.

Help us to rest in this glorious truth. To find our refuge, our sanctuary in you alone. We pray that you will be glorified, Lord, that we will see your glory more and more in your church.
And that as the world looks at your people, Lord, that you've called out of the world. They will see nothing but the glory of God in our lives. And in this congregation we ask, amen.

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