

OUTLINE

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SERMON TEXT

I want you to turn in your Bible to the first page of the book of Matthew and we're going to look at the first seventeen verses of Matthew chapter 1 today. I want to read the first verse of Matthew chapter 1 and then drop down and read the 17th verse and then I'm going to preach on the verses in between. Matthew chapter 1, verse 1 and then verse 17:

1. The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Now verse 17:

17. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

The New Testament begins with a long list of names. That is not exactly how you go about writing a best seller. If you want to write a book that people read then you've got to get their attention at the very beginning of the letter. When I have the opportunity to lead somebody to Christ I try to get them involved in reading the New Testament and I always point out to them that at the very beginning of the New Testament there is this long list of names, most of which I am unable to pronounce. Now I can pronounce some of them, I can pronounce "David" and I can pronounce "Abraham," I can pronounce "Ruth" and "Joseph" and "Mary," but to be perfectly honest with you, most of those other names I can't even begin to pronounce. Now someone told me a long time ago when you get to a name in the Bible you can't pronounce just do the best you can, look as intelligent as you can, and most people won't even know you've mispronounced it. So I try to explain to new converts that right on the very first page of the New Testament there is this long list of names. Well how uninteresting can you get? How boring can a book be to begin by introducing its readers to a long list of names? It's kind of like a guy I heard one time who said he was reading the dictionary. Somebody said, "You're reading the dictionary?" He said, "Yeah, there are a lot of words but the plot is

not much to read." Well you read these name and there doesn't seem to be any rhyme nor reason for the inclusion of these names. One of the psychologies of getting the interest of people in speaking or in writing a book is to immediately grab their attention, to say something that will get their attention at the very outset and then, hopefully, you can get them to follow you all the way through.

Well, did Matthew, the earthly writer of this book, not understand that? Did he not understand the importance of getting the interest of his readers right at the very beginning? Well the fact of the matter is Matthew did understand that and what Matthew did at the beginning of his book, beyond question, would have arrested the interest of the first readers. Now, of course, you and I have got to put ourselves back into the time when Matthew composed his gospel and we've got to remember that Matthew wrote this gospel primarily for a Jewish audience. So if a Jew in the time of Matthew had picked up this particular gospel and had read, "The book of the generations," that is, the record of the origin, "of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham," his attention would have immediately been riveted to the material that he read. Because, you see, all of the Jews who were well-informed in that day understood that the Old Testament had predicted that the Messiah, the Christ, was going to come. They also understood that the Messiah was going to be in the ancestral line of Abraham, the father of their nation, and also of David who was their great king. So the Lord Jesus Christ came and He said that He came as the Christ. In fact you remember, the Lord Jesus said to Simon Peter one time, "Simon, who do people say I am?" And he gave all of the opinions that people had about Him and then He said, "But, Simon, who do you say I am?" And Simon said, "Thou are the Christ, the Messiah, the son of the living God." Well, of course, that was a tremendous claim, and so a Jew reading this statement right here would immediately be interested because any man who claimed to be their Messiah had to be able to prove His pedigree. Well that is exactly the reason why this long list of names is given. It is to prove to us that Jesus Christ has the right to be the King of the Jews and the Savior of the world on the basis of His ancestral connection with David their great king and Abraham the father of their family.

Now what I want to do today is to just talk to you a little bit about the meaning and the purpose of this family tree of the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to call your attention, first of all, in verse 1 to the special nature of it. You will notice it begins by saying, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ." That is a rather significant statement here. The book, that is, the record, of the generation, that is, the origin, of Jesus Christ, Jesus Messiah. Now that is a particular phrase that is not found many places in the Bible. In fact, if you start back through your Old Testament you will discover that you flip all the way back through the books of the prophets, and you go all the way through the wisdom books, Psalms and Proverbs and Ecclesiastes and all of this, you move back all through the historical books; in fact, you go all the way back to the book of Genesis, the first book in your Bible, and the fifth chapter and the first verse. Now I want you to turn there for a moment: Genesis chapter 5 and verse 1. That's the only other time you find a statement which closely resembles the

statement of Matthew chapter 1 and verse 1. Look at what it says in Genesis chapter 5 and verse 1. It says in that verse:

1. This is the book of the generations of Adam.

Now do you see the similarity there? Matthew 1:1 says: the book of the generation of Jesus Christ; Genesis 5:1 says: the book of the generations of Adam. So actually what Matthew is doing when he ties these two statements together is leading us out of the Old Testament and bringing us into the New Testament. You see, Matthew is a bridge that brings us from the old into the new. And, of course, we also learn that the Bible is basically a book which has two families in it: Matthew 1:1, the New Testament is the book of Jesus Christ; Genesis 5:1, the Old Testament is the book of the generations of Adam. Now there are only two families, spiritually speaking, in all of the world. There is the family of Adam and there is the family of Jesus Christ. Now in that fifth chapter of the book of Genesis that is a very familiar chapter to most of us because it is the chapter that is known as the "death chapter." In fact, as you read through Genesis chapter 5 you will find a recurring phrase. It will talk about a particular person, it will say he lived, it will tell how long he lived, and then it will say, "And he died." Then it will move on to another person and it will tell how long he lived and then it will say, "And he died." Now, of course, what that does by the way is remind us that God always tells the truth and the devil always tells a lie.

You remember in Genesis the third chapter in the garden of Eden and the devil came to Eve in the garden, you remember that? And the Bible says that the devil said to her, "Can you eat of all of the trees of the garden?" And she said, "Well, I can eat of all of the trees of the garden except one, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and I can't eat of that because God has said in the day I eat of that I will surely die." Do you remember what the devil said to her? The devil said to her, "Aw, thou shalt not surely die." Now there you've got two statements: you've got the Word of God and you've got the word of the devil. God said the day you eat it you'll die; the devil said, Thou shalt not surely die. Well you know just exactly what happened. Adam and Eve took of the forbidden fruit and so now we come to the fifth chapter of Genesis and over and over again the chapter says, "And he died," "And he died," "And he died," And he died." Ladies and gentlemen, when God says something in the Bible you just put it down, it is absolutely the truth. God says what He means and God means what He says. So the Old Testament is the family of Adam. It is the Adam book and the Adam family doesn't have a very positive future, it is the family of death.

But when you come to the New Testament and you read this genealogy of Jesus you will find a different terminology altogether. It says in verse 2 for instance:

2. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren...

Do you see that word "begat?" All the way down through it, 39 times,

it uses that word "begat." Now the word "begat" is a word that is used to describe biological origin. In other words Abraham became the father of Isaac; Isaac became the father of Jacob; and it simply means life. You see, the Adam family, and he died, and he died; the Jesus family, and he lived, and he lived, and he lived. Well, of course, you see that's the whole story of the whole human race. Everybody in this building today is in one of those two families. Now, of course, all of us started off in the Adam family, didn't we? Look over in I Corinthians 15 for a moment. In I Corinthians 15 I think Paul must have had this in mind when he wrote the 22nd verse of that 15th chapter. Look at I Corinthians 15 and in verse 22, and it says there:

22. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

Now what I want you to do for just a moment is to answer this question on the basis of that verse: Which are you in this morning? Are you in Adam or are you in Christ? Well you see, all of us got into the family of Adam by means of our physical birth, isn't that right? I am a Vines, that's my last name. How did I become a Vines? Well I became a Vines because 51 years ago I became the son of Clarence Vines. You see, Clarence Vines begat Jerry Vines. I was born physically into the Vines family. Well, of course, you see I was really born into more than just the Vines family, I was born into the Adam family, because you see, when it says there in Adam, that means in the human family. So every one of you, by virtue of your physical birth, are in the human family, the family of Adam. Well, you see, you don't have a very bright future, I'm sorry to tell you, because Paul says very specifically, in Adam all do what? Die. And, of course, that's right. The Bible says it is appointed unto man once to die. And, of course, you're one day closer to death right now than you've ever been. And, folks, I am here to remind you today that death is a certainty and yet death is uncertain. It is certain in that you are going to die, it is uncertain in that you do not know when you're going to die. And, of course, that's why you ought to give your life to Christ this very moment if you've never been saved. That's why you ought not dare walk out of this building today without Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. You're taking a tremendous chance, it is a tremendous gamble.

Now if I had the ability to know that you're going to live to be a 70-year old man, I might possibly say to you, "Well, think about it and be sure you know what you're doing and somewhere down the road give your life to Christ." I really wouldn't do that, because I want to tell you, it's not worth it to live a day and not have Jesus as your Savior. But I might say to you, if you're going to have 70 years, you could think about it. But you see, the Bible says, Boast not thyself of tomorrow for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. The only intelligent time to give your life to Christ is right now. You see, that's why the Bible says, Today is the day of salvation, now is the accepted time. You see, yesterday is gone forever, you can't decide to do what you need to do today yesterday because it's already gone. Tomorrow may never come, so you need to give your life to Christ this very day. In Adam all die.

But in Christ shall all be made alive. Now the Jesus family has got a much better prospect. You see, if you know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior then your future is described by this word "life." In Christ shall all be made alive. Coming to Jesus Christ brings you to life. It brings you to life not only in the here and now, in that to have Jesus Christ is to have life and to have it more abundantly, but it also brings you life in eternity because the Bible says the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. You see, you may die physically if you're a born-again child of God, but I've got news for you, that physical death is just a passageway. All in the world that physical death for you is going to be is a transformation or a translation from the restrictions of physical life into the liberty of eternal life. So you see, you need to get into the Jesus family this morning. That's what this genealogy is all about, it's telling you how to get into the Jesus family.

Well, how do you get into the Jesus family? Well, you get into the Jesus family in a similar way that you get into the Adam family. You're born into the Adam family by physical birth, so you get into the Jesus family by birth but Jesus called it a new birth. He said, Ye must be born again. So, you see, the moment you repent of your sins and invite the Lord Jesus into your heart and into your life you're born again and you become a member of the Jesus family. Boy, I want to tell you, if you were a Jew in the time when Matthew wrote this, boy, you would immediately be interested. And, of course, you see, you ought to be interested, too, because all of you want to know how to go to heaven when you die and how to have life in a meaningful, purposeful way right here. The book of the generation of Jesus Christ.

Now, the son of David, and several times in the gospel of Matthew He is referred to as the son of David. Sometimes when people came to Him for healing they would say, Thou son of David, have mercy on us. So that just simply reminds us that Jesus Christ is in the kingly line of the great kings of Israel. You see, we see first of all that He is in Israel's book but now, secondly, we see He is in Israel's blessing in that He is the son of David, He has royalty about Him. Now, of course, you get into a royal family by heredity, you are normally born into that family. One of these days Prince Charles will become King Charles, king of England. He was born into that situation, he had nothing whatsoever to do with it himself, he was just born into that situation. Well Christ was born into the royal line of David. Now he says also, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the great father of the nation but he was also the great father of faith. In fact he is called in the New Testament, "faithful Abraham," and it reminds us that Jesus is not only a national Savior, the son of David, but He is a universal Savior, the son of Abraham, because all who put their faith in Jesus Christ looking back to the cross, as Abraham put his faith in Him looking forward to the cross, become a member of the great family of faith.

So are you in the Jesus family this morning? That's the special nature of this genealogy. But now, verse 1, having given us the heading for the remaining verses, I want us to look secondly at the specific nature of this genealogy. In other words, I want to talk

about these names for a few moments. Now obviously I'm not going to talk about all of them. You're glad to hear that, aren't you? Now, of course, this service is over at nine o'clock. One thing about this service, whether I'm through or not everybody gets up and leaves about nine o'clock. Now don't leave until the service is over though, don't do that, don't walk out while the invitation is given; don't you be going yonder way while we're trying to get folks to come this way. Okay? But I do know that I've got until about nine o'clock to get all this in so I'm not going to use all of these names. And you say, Preacher, how in the world can you get anything out of these names? You know, a few years ago there was a black man named Alex Haley and he wrote a book entitled "Roots." It was a very big book. In fact I read that book in its entirety one week down in Merritt Island, Florida. I went down there for a revival. The first night of the revival meeting I got sick right in the pulpit, I came down with the flu or something, and so I was holed up in a hotel down there and I read "Roots" while I was sick. And then, of course, later on it became, as you remember, a mini-series, probably the most viewed of all time.

Well what was "Roots" all about? What was so interesting about "Roots?" Well actually Alex Haley just gave us what Matthew gives us here. Matthew gives us the family tree of Jesus, Alex Haley gave us his family tree. And, of course, you remember Kunta Kinte and Chicken George and all of those. Well did you know if Alex Haley had just taken those names and had just listed them on a one-page booklet he could have stood on a street corner somewhere and he couldn't have given those things away. But do you know what Alex Haley did? He took that family tree and those names that meant nothing just being listed one after the other and he told the story behind those names and it became a best seller. Well, of course, you see, that's what this Bible does for us. These names are expanded in the Old Testament and you get a thrilling, exciting story behind the listing of these names. By the way, one of the reasons these names are here is that it lets us know that God is interested in people and that He's interested in knowing people by their names, that God knows us by name. I've got news for you, friends, the devil's got a number for his children but God's got a name for us. Isn't that wonderful? Yes, sir, when you get saved the Bible says there's a new name, God's got a new name for you. God's children don't have numbers they have names. Now, of course, you know can read through that list and unless your name is Ruth or David or Mary you probably don't get your name there, but I'll tell you one thing, if you saw your name there it sure would get your attention, wouldn't it?

God's interested in people. So I want you to notice the meaning of these names. When I look at these names one of the things I see is grief in these names. Now these people are from all kinds of backgrounds. They are in all kinds of attire. Some of these people are wrapped in the royal robes of royalty, others of them are wrapped in the sackcloth garments of a captive slave, some of them are attired in the peasant garb of lowly men, all kinds of names. There are some good folks in this list and there are some not-so-good folks and there are some bad folks in this list. A few years ago I had a company write me a letter and said they would like, for a price, to trace my family

tree for me, tell me about all my ancestors. I started to do it, then I changed my mind. I got to thinking about it, I said, I'm not sure, there might be some bootleggers and horse thieves back in my family tree, I'm not sure I want to know about my family tree. Because you see, friends, all families dip in some strange places and seem at times to be lost in moral swamps. And by the way, don't ever blame anybody for what he cannot help. Don't blame anybody for what his background may be. It's not what their background is, it's what they've become in the Lord Jesus. Isn't that wonderful to know?

So when you read these names there's grief here. There is one thing that every person listed in this list of names, with the exception of Jesus Christ, have in common. You know what that one thing is? They were all sinners. Every one of them. Now we're getting ready to come to Christmas time and if there's anything else that Christmas tells us, the message of Christmas tells us that we are sinners and we desperately need a Savior. That's the meaning of Christ, that's what Christmas is all about, it is the message that we are sinners, that we cannot save ourselves, and so what happened, God sent His Son Jesus, and down in this 21st verse of this chapter it says: Thou shalt call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins. Oh, the grief and the misery of sin.

You know, I don't guess there's another time of the year that demonstrates the sinfulness of man like Christmas. Have you ever thought about that? Probably no other time of year---there's more drunkenness at the very time we're supposed to celebrate the birth of the Savior of the world than any other time. And by the way, I want to start early and urge some of you folks not to get caught in the web of Christmas parties and sacrifice your convictions and go along with the drinking crowd at Christmas time. You don't have to have it. Say "NO" to drugs. Amen? Alcohol is, you know, the most abused drug, say "NO" to drugs. Make up your mind that you're not going to offend the name of the Lord Jesus Christ by getting involved in drunkenness at Christmas time. More family turmoil, more family conflicts at Christmas time than at any other time. Make up your mind you're going to live a better life than that, you're going to honor the birth of Jesus at Christmas time. Christmas reminds us that we're sinners and that we need a Savior. There's grief in these names.

But I want to tell you something else, friends, there's grace in these names, because when you look through these names, if I had the time to tell the story of them, you would see how that God took some of these people who were lost in their sins and saved them by His wonderful, marvelous grace. And, of course, you know, that's what Christmas is all about, too. Christmas is II Corinthians 8:9---For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich yet for your sakes He became poor that you through His poverty might be made rich. That's the Christmas story. The Christmas story is Romans 5:20---Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. I mean here are sinners and they're in the family tree of Jesus. That's the story of grace.

Now let me explain that or illustrate that to you in a unique

feature of these names. If you'll read through these names sometimes you will notice that there are some women listed in this genealogy. You say, Well what's the big deal about that? Well the big deal about that is that it was highly unusual in Jewish genealogies for the names of women to be listed. Now, ladies, you of all ought to have a deep, abiding love and appreciation for the Lord Jesus because when Jesus came the role of the woman was not much in society. In fact in those days a Jew, a deeply religious Jew, would get up and in his morning prayer he would thank God for three things: he would thank God he was not a Gentile, he would thank God that he was not a slave, and then he would thank God he was not a woman. That's what he prayed every morning if he was a deeply religious Jew. So they didn't put women's names in genealogies. And yet when you read carefully the family tree of Jesus you will find the inclusion of some women.

For instance, look at verse 3. Do you see that word "Tamar?" T-h-a-m-a-r. That's a woman's name. Look down at verse 5. Do you see "Rachab?" R-a-c-h-a-b. Drop out the "C" and you get it---Rahab. And then you see Ruth and then in verse 6, her name is not mentioned but it's Bathsheba who was the mother of Solomon, and then, of course, obviously on down there in verse 16, Mary, the mother of Jesus. Now why did Matthew include these names of the women? Because their story is the story of grace, it is the story of how they got into the family of Jesus. For instance, Tamar, what do you know about Tamar? I wouldn't read her story in a mixed service. I wouldn't read you Genesis chapter 38. Not everything in the Bible is supposed to be publicly read. Listen, it's a sordid page in the Bible. I wouldn't dare read it. Listen, she disguised herself as a prostitute and arranged to get herself pregnant by her husband's father. It's a terrible picture. Well then how did she get in the family tree of Jesus? One simple way, she got in 'cause she was a sinner and needed a Savior. You see, that's how all of us, that's where God meets all of us. God does not meet you at the point of your goodness, God meets you at the point of your badness. You see? The Bible says that Jesus came not to call the righteous but to call sinners unto repentance. Aren't you glad of that? Aren't you glad you don't have to get good enough to get in the family? See, we get in the family because we're sinners who need a Savior. That's how she got in.

And then you move on down to verse 5, Rahab. Now you know who Rahab was. She was a prostitute. The first two women named in this genealogy were prostitutes. She was a prostitute in Jericho. If you want to tell me she was the most wicked woman in Jericho I wouldn't argue with you. She didn't have a thing in the world to recommend her and yet when you read the 11th chapter of the book of Hebrews, the great chapter of the heroes and the heroines of the faith, you'll find that Rahab the harlot is mentioned. How in the world did she get there? Well, the Bible says that she heard what God did at the Red Sea and when she heard what God did at the Red Sea she believed it and the Bible says by faith she got in. You see, that's how you all get in. The gospel is something you hear. See? The gospel is a message you hear. You've got to hear the gospel to be saved. That's why I preach every Sunday, that's why Dr. Lindsay preaches every Sunday, that's why we send visitors out knocking on doors---people need to hear the story.

Oh, listen, friends, I have heard an old, old story, how the Savior came from glory, how He gave His life on Calvary, how He shed His blood for me. Ladies and gentlemen, the gospel is a message you hear and if you'll hear it and receive it by faith and commit your life to it you'll be saved. That's how she got in.

And then, of course, the third one, Ruth. How in the world did Ruth get in? You know, Ruth was a foreigner, she was a Moabitess. You remember that? She came back with Naomi. You know the story. All the girls love the story of Ruth. All the girls getting ready to get married, they want that little verse in there: Entreat me not to leave thee.... So romantic. She came back with Naomi, she was an outcast. The law excluded Ruth and yet there was a guy named Boaz, he was an eligible bachelor. If he'd been living in Jacksonville he would have been on the most eligible bachelors list, probably number one. And one day he was riding down through his fields and Ruth was out there getting some of those leftover grain in the field and Boaz looked there and he saw Ruth and, to give a loose paraphrase of it, he said, Wowee! Who in the world is that? That's just a loose paraphrase of what the Scripture says. He said, Whooo! Who is she? And, boy, I'm telling you, he just started loading her down with grain and everything else, and do you remember what Ruth said? She said, Why have I found grace in thine eyes? Well that's an easy question to answer. I'll tell you why she found grace in his eyes, she was good looking, that's why. But you know the question that I can't answer? Why have I found grace in God's eyes? I'll tell you, that's the question I'll never be able to answer. Sinner that I am, deserving of hell that I am, how could He ever love me so? Well you see, what law excluded, grace included, and Ruth got in the family tree of Jesus because someone showed the kindness of God to her.

That's how you've got to get in. You get in by grace. So you see, these women's names just simply point out to us that there is grace in these verses. Grief? Yes. But grace. Hope for the sinner in these verses. But now, you see, God's building up to something. The mention of these names, any well-informed Jew would begin to look at these names and he'd say, Well now, wait a minute, here are women's names, what is God up to? Well you see, that's the third thing I want to say, not only is there grief in these names, not only is there grace in these names, God is in these names. If you read some of these individual life histories you wouldn't see how in the world God could ultimately bring them to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into this world. But let me tell you something, friends, God is sovereign in history, God is moving in the details of history and His ultimate purpose will always be served. You do not stymie the will of God in human history. God's going to do what He wants to do. It's like a master chess player and an amateur playing. Let's say you're the amateur and you just make any kind of move on the board you want to and any move you make the old master chess player can eventually make it come out just like he wants it to come out. Well, you see, that's the sovereignty of God. The whole purpose of this genealogy is to show that despite their failure, despite their wandering away, God took all of the details of human history and made them converge on the coming of Jesus into this world.

So you read all the way down through here, you get down to verse 11 and you hit a snag because in verse 11 it says: Josias begat Jechonias. Jot this in the margin of your Bible and read it, Jeremiah 22, verse 30. Jeremiah 22, verse 30, specifically said that Jechonias would never have an ancestor of his sit on the throne of Israel, and yet here is the Lord Jesus Christ, He is called the son of David and yet He is in the line of Jechonias. So you see, God has to do a miracle here in order to bring it about. Now look at verse 16: And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, and Joseph begat Jesus. Is that what your Bible says? Let me read it again. I must have misread it. And Jacob begat Joseph, and Joseph was the father of Jesus. Is that what it says? No. Let me read it a little closer. And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary (feminine), of whom, the pronoun there is a feminine, not referring to Joseph but referring to Mary, of whom, that is, of Mary, was born Jesus. Let me tell you what, friends, all of the begats of human history could never have begotten the Lord Jesus Christ. And what he's saying right there is, God stepped by the restriction of verse 11, Jesus was not born in the line of Joseph literally, He was born in the line of Joseph legally. Joseph was the legal father of Jesus, he was not the literal father of Jesus, because when Jesus was born of Mary He was born supernaturally, He was virgin-born of Mary and thus He qualifies to be the Son of God, the Savior of the world. That's what this genealogy is all about.

Now, friends, I'm going to make a statement and then I'm going to wrap up the message. I want you to listen to it very carefully. Jesus Christ is the only person of human history who can justifiably lay a claim to be the Messiah, the Savior of the world. Now let me explain that statement. As I understand it, the Jewish records, the Jewish genealogies were kept in the temple of Jerusalem. That's why none of the enemies ever challenged the genealogical record of Jesus. They never challenged that He was of the line of Abraham nor of the line of David because it was on public record. All you had to do was go check it and I will assure you that the enemies of Jesus checked it and they found out that He checked out, that He was indeed qualified scripturally to be the Messiah, but in A.D. 70, when the city of Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple was burned and all of the records of the Jews were destroyed. Friends, there is only one in all of the world who can prove by the actual record that He's qualified to be the Savior of the world and that's Jesus.

So I've got a question to ask you today: What will you do with Jesus who is called the Christ?

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