On Death, Dying, and the Future Hope End-Time Deceptions

Lesson #11 for December 10, 2022

Scriptures: Matthew 7:21-27; John 11:40-44; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 Samuel 28:3-25; Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Corinthians 11:14-15.

1. In this lesson we will look at a number of end-time deceptions regarding death and its results. We will see how they are in direct contradiction to the truth in the Bible.

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] Our contemporary world has become a melting pot of the supernatural and the mystical, helped on by Hollywood, which has no problem making movies with religious and mystical themes in a hodgepodge of error and deception. The old lie " 'You surely will not die!' " (Gen. 3:4, NASB) also has inspired some of the most-read books and most-watched movies of the past few decades, and many popular video games, as well. Undeniably, we are exposed to and tempted by the enchanted ground of Satan, which can appear in myriad forms and even, in some cases, can come hidden under the veneer of science.

One of the most deceptive phenomena has been what have been called "near death" experiences (NDEs), where those who had "died" have come back to life with stories of an afterlife. Many people have seen these events as proof of an immortal soul!

During this week, we will consider some end-time deceptions, including mysticism, near-death experiences, reincarnation, necromancy and ancestor worship, and others. These are dangerous subjects that we should be aware of but without exposing ourselves to their influences.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, December 3.^{†‡§}

2. Let us look at several of these deceptions, one at a time. Let us start with **Mysticism**.

[BSG:] Our world has been flooded by the strong waves of mysticism. The word "mysticism" is a complex term that encapsulates a huge variety of ideas. From a religious perspective, the word implies the **union of the individual with the Divine or Absolute in some kind of spiritual experience or trance**. This characterizes the worship experience even of certain churches. The phenomena can vary in form and intensity, but the **tendency always is to replace the authority of the Written Word of God with one's own subjective experiences**. In any case, the Bible loses much of its doctrinal function, and the Christian remains vulnerable to his or her own experiences. This kind of subjective religion does not provide a safeguard against any deception, especially end-time ones.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, December 4.^{†‡}

3. How is mysticism practiced in our day? People do not want to take time to carefully read Scripture and analyze how important it is to follow the Bible's teachings. They The Future Hope #11 - page 1 of 10

prefer to claim that they believe in the Person of Jesus Christ, arguing that Jesus would never do such a thing or teach such a thing as suggested in certain passages of the Bible. In some cases, what they are effectively saying is that their opinion of what Jesus would do or would not do is superior to and more relevant than what God has said and recorded in Scripture!

4. We only have to look back at the history of the Roman Catholic Church to realize that people who claim to believe in Jesus Christ have murdered literally millions of Protestant Christians. Matthew 7:22 tells us that even some of the people who have cast out demons in Christ's name will have no part in His kingdom.

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] **The position that it is of no consequence what men believe is one of Satan's most successful deceptions.** He knows that the truth, received in the love of it, sanctifies the soul of the receiver; therefore **he [Satan] is constantly seeking to substitute false theories, fables, another gospel**.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 520.2.^{†‡}

[EGW:] Multitudes have a wrong conception of God and His attributes, and are as truly serving a false god as were the worshipers of Baal.—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings** 177.1.^{†‡}

- 5. We must not allow our human desires or emotions to cause us to do things or to believe things contrary to the Word of God. *Have we ever been tempted to do such a thing?*
- 6. Next, let us consider "near-death experiences."

[BSG:] Some of the most popular modern arguments to "prove" the theory of the natural immortality of the soul are "near-death experiences." In his book *Life After Life: The Investigation of a Phenomenon—Survival of Bodily Death* (Atlanta, GA: Mockingbird, 1975), Raymond A. Moody, Jr., presented the results of his five-year study of more than one hundred people who experienced "clinical death" and were revived. **These individuals claimed to have seen a loving and warm being of light before coming back to life.** This has been regarded as "exciting evidence of the survival of the human spirit beyond death" (back cover). Over the years, many other similar books have been published, promoting the same idea.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, December 5.^{†‡§}

7. There are a number of resurrection stories in the Bible, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. First Kings 17:22-24; 2 Kings 4:34-37; Mark 5:41-43; Luke 7:14-17; and John 11: 40-44 are some examples. None of these examples tell us anything about those who had died having any so-called near-death experiences.

[BSG:] All near-death experiences reported in modern literature are of people considered *clinically* dead, but not *really* dead, in contrast to Lazarus, who was dead for four days and whose corpse was rotting (*John 11:39*). Neither Lazarus nor any of those raised from the dead in biblical times ever mentioned any afterlife experience, whether in Paradise, in purgatory, or in hell. This is, indeed, **an argument from silence**, but it is in full agreement with the biblical teachings on the unconscious state of the

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dead!—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, December 5.^{†‡§} [*How do you personally understand and explain these NDEs?*][‡]

8. We do not want to deny the fact that some people may have had those kinds of experiences. So, what is the explanation?

[BSG:] If we accept the biblical teaching of the unconsciousness of the dead (*Job 3:11–13, Ps. 115:17, Ps. 146:4, Eccles. 9:10*), then we are left with two main possibilities: either it is a natural psychochemical hallucination under extreme conditions, or it can be a supernatural, satanic, deceptive experience (*2 Cor. 11:14*). Satanic deception could indeed be the explanation, especially because in some cases, these people claim to have talked to their dead relatives! But it could be a combination of both factors.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, December $5.^{\pm\$}$

- 9. We are not denying the fact that reports of such near-death experiences might be real. They are reported "scientifically." Does that mean that the conclusions that the authors draw when reporting on the stories are proof of life after death? No! Think of all the evolutionary ideas that are supposedly supported by science!
- 10. Next, let us look at **reincarnation**. Reincarnation is sometimes also called *the transmigration of the soul*. It is a major doctrine held by the Hindu religion.

[BSG:] **Hindus believe that the eternal soul goes through a progression of consciousness or "samsara" in six classes of life:** aquatics, plants, reptiles and insects, birds, animals, and human beings, including the residents of heaven.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, December 6.^{†‡§} [These ideas have been adopted and extended by evolutionists.][‡]

- 11. Scripture passages such as Hebrews 9:25-28 and 1 Peter 3:18 clearly state that we live once; and then, we die on this earth. In light of these passages, why do some Christians believe that some kind of reincarnation is possible?
 - Hebrews 9:27-28: ²⁷Everyone must die once, and after that be judged by God.
 ²⁸In the same manner Christ also was offered in sacrifice once to take away the sins of many. He will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are waiting for him.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Hebrews 9:27-28). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].[‡]
- 12. Many of these false teachings are accepted for a specific reason.

[BSG:] **Many people believe not in what they** *should* **believe but in what they** *want* **to believe.** If a theory brings them existential peace and comfort, that is enough to settle the discussion for them. But for those who take the Bible seriously, there is no way to accept the theory of reincarnation.

First, this theory contradicts the biblical teachings of the mortality of the "soul" and the resurrection of the body *(1 Thess. 4:13–18)*.

Second, it negates the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ (*Eph. 2:8–10*) and replaces it with human works.

Third, the theory contradicts the biblical teaching that one's eternal destiny is decided forever by one's decisions in this life (*Matt. 22:1–14, Matt. 25:31–46*).

Fourth, this theory downplays the meaning and relevance of Christ's second coming (*John 14:1–3*).

And **fifth**, the theory proposes after-death opportunities for someone still to overcome his or her own life's pitfalls, which is unbiblical (*Heb. 9:27*).—*Adult* Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Tuesday, December 6.^{†‡§} [*Are these points clear in your mind? Do you still have questions?*][‡]

13. Next, we will talk about **necromancy and ancestor worship**.

[BSG:] The word "necromancy" derives from the Greek terms *nekros* (dead) and *manteia* (divination). Practiced since ancient times, necromancy is a form of summoning the alleged active spirits of the dead in order to obtain knowledge, often about future events. Ancestor worship, meanwhile, is the custom of venerating deceased ancestors because they are still considered family, and these spirits can, it is believed, influence the affairs of the living. These pagan practices can be very attractive to those who believe in an immortal soul and who also miss their deceased loved ones.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, December 7.^{†‡§}

- 14. King Saul had an experience that should warn us against all such beliefs. Read 1 Samuel 28:3-25.
 - **1 Samuel 28:3-25**: ³ Now Samuel had died, and all the Israelites had mourned for him and had buried him in his own city of Ramah. Saul had forced all the fortune tellers and mediums to leave Israel.

⁴ The Philistine troops assembled and camped near the town of Shunem; Saul gathered the Israelites and camped at Mount Gilboa. ⁵When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was terrified, ⁶and so **he asked the LORD what to do. But the LORD did not answer him at all, either by dreams or by the use of Urim and Thummim or by prophets.** ⁷Then Saul ordered his officials, "Find me a woman who is a medium, and I will go and consult her."

"There is one in Endor," they answered.

⁸ So **Saul disguised himself**; he put on different clothes, and after dark he went with two of his men to see the woman. "Consult the spirits for me and tell me what is going to happen," he said to her. "Call up the spirit of the man I name."

⁹ The woman answered, "Surely you know what King Saul has done, how he forced the fortune tellers and mediums to leave Israel. Why, then, are you trying to trap me and get me killed?" ¹⁰ Then Saul made a sacred vow. "By the living LORD I promise that you will not be punished for doing this," he told her.

¹¹ "Whom shall I call up for you?" the woman asked.

"Samuel," he answered.

¹² When the woman saw Samuel, she screamed and said to Saul, "Why have you tricked me? You are King Saul!"

¹³ "Don't be afraid!" the king said to her. "What do you see?"

"I see a spirit coming up from the earth," she answered.

¹⁴ "What does it look like?" he asked.

"It's an old man coming up," she answered. "He is wearing a cloak."

Then Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed to the ground in respect.

¹⁵ Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me? Why did you make me come back?"

Saul answered, "I am in great trouble! **The Philistines are at war with me, and God has abandoned me. He doesn't answer me any more, either by prophets or by dreams.** And so I have called you, for you to tell me what I must do."

¹⁶ Samuel said, "Why do you call me when the LORD has abandoned you and become your enemy? ¹⁷The LORD has done to you what he told you through me: he has taken the kingdom away from you and given it to David instead. ¹⁸You disobeyed the LORD's command and did not completely destroy the Amalekites and all they had. That is why the LORD is doing this to you now. ¹⁹He will hand you and Israel over to the Philistines. Tomorrow you and your sons will join me, and the LORD will also hand the army of Israel over to the Philistines."

²⁰ At once Saul fell down and lay stretched out on the ground, terrified by what Samuel had said. He was weak, because he had not eaten anything all day and all night. ²¹The woman went over to him and saw that he was terrified, so she said to him, "Please, sir, I risked my life by doing what you asked. ²²Now please do what I ask. Let me prepare some food for you. You must eat so that you will be strong enough to travel."

²³ Saul refused and said he would not eat anything. But his officers also urged him to eat. He finally gave in, got up from the ground, and sat on the bed. ²⁴The woman quickly killed a calf which she had been fattening. Then she took some flour, prepared it, and baked some bread without yeast. ²⁵She set the food before Saul and his officers, and they ate it. And they left that same night.—*Good News Bible*.*[†]

15. Leviticus 19:31; 20:6,27; and Deuteronomy 18:9-14 make it very clear that all spiritual mediums, sorcerers, and necromancers in the ancient Israelite theocracy were abominations of the LORD and should be put to death by stoning.

16. Are you absolutely certain that it is impossible to contact the dead? Do you know anyone that has tried to do that? Would you be able to tell the Devil to depart because you know about him?

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- Leviticus 19:31: "Do not go for advice to people who consult the spirits of the dead. If you do, you will be ritually unclean. I am the LORD your God."—*Good News Bible*.*
- Leviticus 20:6,27: ⁶ "If anyone goes for advice to people who consult the spirits of the dead, I will turn against him and will no longer consider him one of my people...."

²⁷ "Any man or woman who consults the spirits of the dead shall be stoned to death; any person who does this is responsible for his own death."—*Good News Bible*.*

Deuteronomy 18:9-14: ⁹ "When you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, don't follow the disgusting practices of the nations that are there. ¹⁰Don't sacrifice your children in the fires on your altars; and don't let your people practice divination or look for omens or use spells ¹¹or charms, and don't let them consult the spirits of the dead. ¹²The LORD your God hates people who do these disgusting things, and that is why he is driving those nations out of the land as you advance. ¹³Be completely faithful to the LORD."

¹⁴ Then Moses said, "In the land you are about to occupy, people follow the advice of those who practice divination and look for omens, but the LORD your God does not allow you to do this."—*Good News Bible*.*[†]

- 17. Notice carefully that the witch of Endor professed to bring Samuel *up* from the grave. That was obviously wrong, even in her own thinking. In her thinking if Samuel had been a faithful follower of God, he should have been in heaven; and then, she should have called him *down*, not *up* from the grave.
- 18. Another familiar passage dealing with this issue is found in Isaiah 8:19-20.
 - **Isaiah 8:19-20**: ¹⁹ But people will tell you to ask for messages from fortune tellers and mediums, who chirp and mutter. They will say, "After all, people should ask for messages from the spirits and consult the dead on behalf of the living."

²⁰ You are to answer them, "Listen to what the LORD is teaching you! Don't listen to mediums—what they tell you cannot keep trouble away."—*Good News Bible*.*[†]

- **Isaiah 19:2-3**: ²The LORD says,... ³ "I am going to frustrate the plans of the Egyptians and destroy their morale. They will ask their idols to help them, and they will go and consult mediums and ask the spirits of the dead for advice."—*Good News Bible*.*
- 19. Christians who are serious about their religion need to study their Bibles carefully and pray for direction from the Holy Spirit not to accept any of these false teachings.
- 20. Another topic for this lesson is **personations and other appearances.**

[BSG:] Similar to necromancy are the demonic personations of the dead and other demonic appearances. The personations can be in the form of a deceased family member, friend, or anyone. **Both the physical appearance and the voice are very similar to those of the deceased**. All these satanic deceptions will be used to deceive those who are not firmly grounded in God's Word.—Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Thursday, December 8.^{†‡}

- 2 Corinthians 11:14-15: ¹⁴Well, no wonder! Even Satan can disguise himself to look like an angel of light! ¹⁵So it is no great thing if his servants disguise themselves to look like servants of righteousness. In the end they will get exactly what their actions deserve.—*Good News Bible*.*[†]
- 21. Are we prepared to have Satan or one of his angels appear to us as a departed relative? It is very likely that we will see and hear a lot more of that as we get near the end.
- 22. In Ephesians 6:13-18, we are clearly warned about the forces that we are facing. It is not humans that are behind all of these evils; it is the Devil and all of his forces.

[BSG:] Ellen G. White warns, "The apostles, as personated by these lying spirits, are made to contradict what they wrote at the dictation of the Holy Spirit when on earth."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 557[.1]. And further, "**As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ.**"—*The Great Controversy*, p. 624[.2].—[as quoted in *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, December 8].^{†‡§}

[EGW:] He [Satan] has power to bring before men the appearance of their departed friends. The counterfeit is perfect; the familiar look, the words, the tone, are reproduced with marvelous distinctness. Many are comforted with the assurance that their loved ones are enjoying the bliss of heaven, and without suspicion of danger, they give ear "to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils."—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 552.1;^{†‡} $4SP^*$ 370.2;^{۠‡} SR^* 393.2.^{۠‡} [We need to recognize that we have not only good angels attending us every day, but also evil angels as well. They are present with us at all times. Is it any surprise then that they can look like a departed relative or friend and sound like them as well?][‡]

[EGW:] Satan is a cunning foe. And it is not difficult for the evil angels to represent both saints and sinners who have died, and make these representations visible to human eyes. These manifestations will be more frequent, and developments of a more startling character will appear as we near the close of time.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,* April 1, 1875, par. 12; *Signs of the Times*,* April 12, 1883, par. 8; *Evangelism** 604.3; *The Truth about Angels** 263.1.^{†‡} [See the story of the Fox sisters on Wikipedia: <u>https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fox_sisters</u>.][‡]

[EGW:] Many will be confronted by the spirits of devils personating beloved relatives or friends and **declaring the most dangerous heresies**. These visitants will appeal to our tenderest sympathies and will work miracles to sustain their pretensions. We must be prepared to withstand them with the Bible truth that the dead know not anything and that they who thus appear are the spirits of devils.

[Would you be able to tell your dead "mother" to depart and leave you? Would you be prepared to quote Scripture to support your demand?

What did Jesus say to Satan when Satan tried to tempt Him? "Get thee behind Me, Satan." (See Matthew 4:10.) Could we say that to an apparition? See such an experience as recorded in Job 4:12-19.]

Just before us is "the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Revelation 3:10. All whose faith is not firmly established upon the word of God will be deceived and overcome.—Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy** 560.1-2;^{†‡} *The Truth About Angels** 263.3-4.^{۠‡}

[BSG:] Imagine, though, losing a loved one and then believing that this same loved one appears to you. And expresses love to you. And tells you how much they miss you. And says things that, yes, only they would know. And says that they are now in a better place. If a person is not absolutely grounded in what the Bible teaches about the state of the dead, think of how easily he or she could fall for this deception, especially because they want to believe it, as well.—Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Thursday, December 8.^{†‡§}

[BSG:] There exists a foundation which claims that it is creating technology that will allow us to contact the deceased "via texts, phone calls, and video-conferencing." Calling the dead PMPs (postmaterial persons), its website claims that when humans die they simply pass on "into another phase of forever" but "retain their consciousness, identity, and core aspects of their previous physical form." But, most important, the folks at the foundation claim to be developing, in three phases, technology that will allow communication between material and postmaterial persons.

The first phase will "allow texting and typing with postmaterial family, friends, and experts in every field of expertise." Phase two is supposed to "enable talking with your dear ones who are living in another part of forever." And the third phase, it says, will open the way to "hearing and seeing those who are experiencing the field of all possibilities from a different observation point."

Especially scary is how they test if the communicating dead are really who they claim to be. "For example," the site says, "a bereaved parent might ask the following question of a son or a daughter who has changed worlds: 'Did you have a dog named Snoopy when you were a child? Did we give you a pocketknife for your tenth birthday?' "—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Friday, December 9.^{†‡}

23. How interesting is that in light of this warning from Ellen White?

[EGW:] Spiritual beings sometimes appear to persons in the form of their deceased friends, and relate incidents connected with their lives and perform acts which they performed while living.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 684.4.[‡]

Proverbs 4:23: Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts.—Good News Bible.**

Philippinas 4:8: In conclusion, my brothers and sisters, fill your minds with those things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honourable.—Good News Bible.*

[EGW:] **Thousands have a false conception of God and His attributes. They are as verily serving a false god as were the servants of Baal.** Are we worshiping the true God as He is revealed in His word, in Christ, in nature, or are we adoring some philosophical idol enshrined in His place?—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,* vol. 5, 173.4.^{†‡} [See also *Prophets and Kings* 177.1 as quoted in Item #4 above.][‡]

24. Our world is becoming increasingly interested in spiritualistic experiences: Séances, Ouija boards, movies, books, and tarot cards all talk about spiritualistic ideas.

[BSG:] Mysticism, accounts of near-death experiences (NDEs), belief in reincarnation, necromancy, ancestor worship, and spiritism all contribute to the normalization of such things in our society and to the confusion about the afterlife. But God takes anything that has to do with spiritism very seriously, and the **Bible warns us in extremely strong language against such practices because they are a deception of Satan**.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 145.^{†‡} [All of these things are based on that first lie that Satan told Eve at the tree as recorded in Genesis 3!][‡]

- 25. The book of Revelation repeatedly stresses the fact that in the final events of this world's history, God's faithful people will be in direct conflict with the Devil and all of his forces. He is called Abaddon, Apollyon, the destroyer, that ancient serpent, the huge dragon, Satan, and the Devil. God warns us with very strong language against his behavior and teachings. Notice especially:
 - Revelation 16:13-14: ¹³Then I saw three unclean spirits that looked like frogs. They were coming out of the mouth of the dragon, the mouth of the beast, and the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴They are the spirits of demons that perform miracles. These three spirits go out to all the kings of the world, to bring them together for the battle on the great Day of Almighty God.—*Good News Bible*.*[†]
- 26. Using various metaphors in the book of Ephesians, Paul warned us against the attacks of Satan. The church, God's faithful people, are called *the temple of God* (Ephesians 2:19-22); *the body of Christ* (Ephesians 4:1-16); *the bride of Christ* (Ephesians 5:25-27); and finally, *the army of God* (Ephesians 6:10-17).
- 27. A particularly important warning is found in Ephesians 4:13-16.
 - **Ephesians 4:13-16**: ¹³And so we shall all come together to that oneness in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God; we shall become mature people, reaching to the very height of Christ's full stature. ¹⁴Then we shall no longer be children, carried by the waves and blown about by every shifting wind of the teaching of deceitful people, who lead others into error by the tricks they invent. ¹⁵Instead, by speaking the truth in a spirit of love, we must grow up in every way to Christ, who is the head. ¹⁶Under his control all the different parts of the body fit together, and the whole body is held together by every joint with which it is provided. So when each separate part

works as it should, the whole body grows and builds itself up through love.—*Good News Bible*.*[†]

- 28. Ephesians 6 tells us that we must be prepared with the complete armor of God. We must be armed with truth, with righteousness, with the readiness to announce the good news of peace, with faith as a shield, with salvation as a helmet, and with the Word of God as a sword which the Spirit gives each of us.
- 29. In Ephesians 6:10, Paul started out by saying that we must be armed with a very powerful weapon. The Greek word used is the same word from which we get our word *dynamite*.
- 30. As we have discussed on many occasions, the children of Israel in their history went to war many times. When they fought under the directions of God, they had astonishing success. However, when they went to war without God's direction, they had terrible disasters. What should that teach us today? (See Deuteronomy 20:2-4; 2 Chronicles 20:13-19; and 2 Chronicles 32:6-8.)
- 31. Let us never forget that the present times are a life-and-death matter for Satan. If a group of people come together and stand powerfully for God's side, leading to the second coming, then, it is curtains for Satan. Are we prepared to be a part of that group?
- 32. Paul and John suggested something quite interesting: We are not expected to go out and fight the Devil using our own power. We would fail. We are to stand firmly with the power of the Holy Spirit and allow God to do the fighting for us. Remember that God has already won the victory on Calvary.
- 33. Unfortunately, the Devil has been following every one of us from the day we were born and knows our strengths and our weaknesses. We must not allow him to overcome us. Are we prepared to put on all the armor of God and use it effectively? As we live in the midst of an evil and perverse society? Are we prepared to pray three times a day as Daniel did?
- 34. Do you understand where your weaknesses are? Are you willing to take up those issues with God in prayer? Do you know of someone else who is struggling with some of these issues that we have talked about? What is the best way to pray for them and to try to help them?

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