***Your Prize – Positional Truth  
  
Colossians 2:18-19  
  
COL-445***

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Our subject is "The Error of Angelic Worship," number two, in Colossians 2:18-19.

**Satan**

Christians of the church age are called upon to live a life of holiness, reflecting the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a supernatural demand. How can God possibly say to us, "Be holy as I am holy?" We are to be as holy in conduct and mind as God Himself is. Satan and his demons are in daily opposition to such a godly lifestyle for Christians. Satan hates God. He does all he can to cause Christians to sin, and to try to embarrass the Lord – so to incapacitate Christians from their service mission, and to keep them from doing God's work. Satan, as we tried to show you this morning, is a formidable, hateful, deceptive opponent who can only be defeated by living in temporal fellowship with God the Father; that is, being filled with the Holy Spirit, because you're in fellowship with the Spirit of God, and His power then works in your behalf.

This is not the way things work under the Mosaic Law. And that's why the apostle Paul brings up this whole subject, in this new section that we've begun today, that the Mosaic Law is good and righteous in itself, but it is totally unable to enable us to do what is right. It has no capacity for that. The apostle Paul warns the Colossian Christians against trying to live by the loser Mosaic Law works system instead of the winner church-age grace system.

Now, you may not be directly associated with people who are into the legalism of the Mosaic Law; people who are who have this idea that the church replaced Israel; that God is through with Israel because it rejected its messiah Savior that there will be no future fulfillment of all the covenants to Israel (the promises of God); and, that the church has taken over. That's why they dabble in the Mosaic Law system. And the Mosaic Law system is not grace. It is not an invitation system. It is a "you better do it, or we're going to sock it to you" system. That is the way of the Mosaic Law.

I was told recently about a man who was in one of these Mosaic Law-oriented churches, and who has been teaching a Bible class (Sunday school, or something like that), and faithfully doing that job. And one of the things in that circle of fellowship is that you tithe from your income. Furthermore, they keep records of that, so they know whether you did or not. This poor man came upon hard financial times. He lost his job, and his income throttled down on him. So, for several weeks, he could not pay his tithe, because he was trying to hold things together with what he has to do, with what he has.

Then the so-called church leadership (usually called the board of elders) came to him, and said that they noticed that he had not been paying his tithe. It was irrelevant to them why this was the case. And they told him he would not be able to continue teaching his Bible class, because he was considered unfit – because he didn't pay his time. Would you like to live under a system like that?

Why can't we do like they used to do at the Lutheran Church (which I grew up in), where we read what people gave in the offering the previous Sunday. That would be fun, wouldn't it? Yeah, I mean, they stood up and said, "So-and-so gave this;" and, "So-and-so gave that." Well, one of the nice things about that is that you can have a shorter sermon by the time you get through going through all the statistics of who gave what. Now, is that crazy, or what? It's certainly not grace. Here was this poor man who loves the Lord, and who had put two and two together, and he discovered that: "This group is leading me down a blind alley. The Law of Moses is dead and done with. It never did apply to gentiles, and it never did apply to Christians. And its purpose for the Jewish people has been served. But it was all pictures. Now the reality of all those pictures and symbols has been fulfilled in Christ Who has come.

No, God has not cast off his people, Israel. The apostle Paul asks that question in the book of Romans, and then he uses a strong Greek "megenoito:" "may it never be" – "unthinkable." God is going to keep His promises to His earthly people – everything promised to Abraham, and the subsequent covenants will be fulfilled.

Yes, Israel will one day be the nation that rules this whole earth during the Millennial Kingdom. And for 1,000 years, the Lord Jesus Christ will be on the throne, in the capital city of Jerusalem. And all the nations of the world will look to this people, who today are despised, and who would have a very hard time if it wasn't for Christian America, who stands by to defend God's people.

**The Mosaic Law**

So, this business of the Mosaic Law is not just a small thing. It's not just a small thing to go to church on Saturday. It's not just a small thing to call Christians the new Israel. It's not a small thing to walk into a church, and there's an altar up there. It is not a small thing to have candles burning on it, and incense in the air, and the whole bit that goes with the ritualistic system. It's not a small thing to tell you that you have holy days that you must observe in a certain way, like Christmas and Easter. All of that belongs to a system which is gone.

**The Holy Spirit is Greater than Satan**

Now the Holy Spirit, and the grace age under which we operate, is totally different. And you need to understand what is at stake if you want to play ball with the Old Testament legal system. The Holy Spirit in the Christian is greater than Satan and his world system. Let's put that right up front. 1 John 4:4 says, "You (you Christians)." 1 John is talking to Christians. You know that: "You Christians are from God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is He who is in you (God the Holy Spirit) than he who is in the world (Satan)." So, which spirit are you going to be true to? God the Holy Spirit, who indwells you, or the spirit of Satan, who dwells this world system?

In Colossians 2:18, the apostle Paul begins with an important sentence. He says, "Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize." "Let no one" means anyone who comes along, and claims to be a spiritual authority, with superior spiritual insights – somebody who comes along, and is verbal, and impressive, and has a reputation: "Do not let anybody like that deceive you, and keep defrauding you."

**Defrauding**

You have to understand this word "defraud." The word "defrauding" is the Greek word "katabrabeuo." This is a compound word, made up basically of two other words. And it is a word of divine command. Now, this word comes from, first of all, this verb: "brabeuo."

This word is used in Colossians 3:15. Notice how it's used: "And let the peace of Christ rule ('brabeuo') in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body, and be thankful. You should not be living your life as a Christian in a frenzy of emotion. You should be spiritually stable, taking the high points and the low points in stride: "Let the peace of Christ rule."

So, here, first of all, this word, "brabeuo" means "to rule:" or, "to govern in some way." It also comes from a related word. It comes from the word "brabeus." "Brabeus" means "an umpire:" or, "a judge. And this word is the one that gives us "brabeuo," the verb. So, right away, we know that this has to do with somebody who's coming along and passing judgment. He is making a decision. And "kata" is a preposition that means "against."

So, here you have the idea of an umpire ruling against you. You come sliding into the base, and he says, "You're out." He called the play against you. And what he is telling you is that he condemns your action. He condemns your play. And it disqualifies you now from winning the prize in this contest. And that's what is at heart of this word.

There's another related word to this same group, and that's the word "brabeion." "Brabeion" means "prize." So, that's where the concept of "prize" comes into this intense word, "katabrabeuo."

To give you an idea of the use of this word "prize," we can look at 1 Corinthians 9:24: "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize?" There's the word: "brabeion." Only one receives the prize. So, run in such a way so that you may win. Run the Christian life to be a winner, not to be a loser.

Philippians 3:14 also uses this word: "I press on toward the goal for *the prize* of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Here, the apostle Paul is saying, "I go for the big prize. My whole life is to win the prize."

So, here the apostle Paul is telling me Colossians, who are being threatened, in their spiritual stability, by all these false teachers, saying, "Don't let any one of these men, who come among you, to pass a judgment (call a play) against you to deny you your prize – to, in any way, undermine your prize.

Now, this ("katabrabeuo") is in the Greek present tense, which means: "At no time are you to take it on the chin from these people who are condemning your grace way of life. Just don't take it."

Secondly, it's active. It means that you have to stand up (yourself), and actively reject this kind of encroachment upon your Christian freedom to live by grace. And here's the kicker. The mode of this verb is imperative. It's a command.

So, here God is telling us: "Christians, do not allow anybody to come along and pass a judgment against you, to rob you of your prize by causing you to be deflected from the grace way of life in Christ. Don't let anybody rob you of all the potential, in time, and the rewards in eternity, by passing a judgment against you."

The word "you" refers to all Christians. You should not be intimidated in your biblical, grace orientation, and your practices. By whom? Well, by some superior religious leader who comes in with superior spiritual insights. Teachers come along, as they did in Colossae, claiming to have spiritual revelations from God, which are denied ordinary folks. And they pronounce these Christians, who reject the Mosaic Law, and who refuse to be operating under these Mosaic ways of life things, and they disqualify them from God's blessing.

Paul says, "When they do that, Christians, you stand up and say, 'Wait a minute. That's not true. We understand the grace of God. We understand what we are called to do. We understand where our treasure is.'"

In Colossians 2:16, which we previously studied, says, "Therefore, let no one act as your judge." That was the Greek word "krino:" "Let no one act as your judge.” Now, he comes along and tells them: "Do not let anybody pass judgment against you." And he uses this word "katakrino," which indicates robbing you of a prize, which indicates deliberately trying to deny you what is your right as a Christian. This word, in verse 18, is a lot stronger. Up in verse 16, he said, "Don't let these people be passing judgment against you here." Here, in verse 18, "katabrabeuo" is very strong, It, says, "Resist false teachers." Why? Because they will rob you of your position in Christ.

The idea here is then, in the first sentence of Colossians 2:18, is not to be intimidated, and to be robbed of your prized position as a biblical, grace-oriented, church-age believer, functioning under the filling of the Holy Spirit, free from the dead legalisms of the Mosaic Law. "Do not feel spiritually inferior, or ashamed of your Bible doctrine freedom in Christ – in life, or in your service.

**The Prize**

What is your prize? That is the question. What is it that you should not permit anybody to pass judgment on you – like an umpire who called you out, and condemned the play that you're making of grace salvation?

Colossians 1:27: "To whom God will, to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery." This is a secret, which is revealed in the New Testament, not known in the Old Testament: "Among the gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." What is your prize? Your prize is Christ, in a relationship that the Jews, under the Mosaic Law, never knew, and could never enter into.

Please notice Ephesians 2:7. What is your prize? "In order that in the ages to come, He (God) might show the surpassing riches of His grace and His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus?" What is your prize? The grace way of life in Christ Jesus, and your capacity to live that life, and to obey the Word in the will of God.'

Then the third Scripture is Philippians 3:14, which we just read. Notice again that Paul says, "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Paul says, in verse 13, in front of it: "I don't always do so well. I forget the things I didn't do so well. I forget my failures. I make my confession. I go on. And I reach forward," he says, "to what lies ahead. Well, what lies ahead? The prize of my upward calling in Christ Jesus.

So, there's a certain kind of prize that is ours, as members of the church age – needs the dispensation of the church. The church is not Israel. The church is not the new Israel. The church is one thing, and the nation of Israel is another thing. The nation of Israel served under Judaism, the Mosaic Law. Christians serve under the church doctrines of grace.

When did the church begin? There was no church in the Old Testament. There was no talk about the church in the Old Testament. It was a secret. That's why it was called "a mystery." And it was only revealed after Christ was resurrected from the dead. He made an allusion to it before, as he stepped across the river, outside of Israel, when He said, "I will build my church." And the disciples hadn't heard this. They viewed Him as the One who had come to fulfill the covenant of Israel.

Now, Palm Sunday is behind them. It seemed to the disciples that Jesus was saying: "It's all over, boys. And I'm going to go on to make the payment for the sin of all mankind." And God has stopped the clock on Israel. He had not abandoned, or rejected them, or deserted them. But there were still seven more years of their program uncompleted. It is now on hold: "And I'm going to build something new."

That happened on the day of Pentecost. In Acts 2:1-4 tells us about that. Ten days previous to this, the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven. He's gone now, and a new order of things is coming into being: "And when the day of Pentecost had come (which is a Jewish holiday), they were all together (these Christians – in one place). Suddenly, there came from heaven, a noise like a violent rushing wind. And it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit had given them utterance."

Now, there's a great deal in those verses that we're not going to go into, except to declare that we find, in Acts 10:43-47, that what specifically happened on the day of Pentecost, was that they were all baptized by the Holy Spirit. That never happened in the Old Testament. It was a brand new thing. That baptism of the Holy Spirit took these 120 believers gathered there; fused them into one body, the body of Christ: and, the church was begun. On that day, the church began. It was all Jewish at that time.

Seven years later, in Acts 10:43-47, Peter is called to the home of a military officer, Cornelius. And God tells him: "Go." And Peter recoiled at first: "Gentiles in the church? We don't do that." And God said, "Yes you do, Peter." And you know the story about the coming of the sheep and the unclean animals. And, finally, Peter got the message.

So, in Acts 10:43-47, it says, "Of Him (speaking of Jesus) all the prophets bear witness, that through His name, everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins." And you see again: how do you become a Christian? You believe the gospel. That's how.

Verse 44: "While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the message, and all the circumcised believers, who had come with Peter (the Jews), were amazed because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the gentiles also, for they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, 'Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized, who have just received the Holy Spirit, just as we have.' And he ordered them be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. And then asked him to stay for a few days.

Water baptism is a symbol of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. So, we know, from this passage, that Peter says, "They have the baptism of the Holy Spirit (these gentiles), just like we did.

So, the church dispensation began on the day of Pentecost – one new body of believers: Jew; and, gentile. Now they're all on an equal plane. Even in the Old Testament, when a gentile became a proselyte to Judaism, he was always on a lower level. He wasn't on the same plane as the Jew. But now, Jew and gentile – there is no difference between them. When does it end? When is it all going to end?

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17: "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven." This is the rapture of the church being described as the next thing that's going to happen in prophecy: The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ shall rise first." The dead Christians are raised first: "Then those who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."

This is describing when every last Christian has been brought into the body of Christ, the church. The church is then taken out: out of the graves; and those who are alive. Now this church age did not operate under the Mosaic Law or any kind of legal system. It was the grace of God all the way. And the church was designed to show what God can do for a person, apart from: that person's merit; that person's good works; from that person's ritualism; and, from keeping any part of the Mosaic Law. Knowing the divine setup of things today in the church age is absolutely essential for anybody to live their lives to the fullest in the plan and blessings of God.

Most religious groups are still hung up on the idea that they have replaced Israel. So, the Mosaic Law is a barnacle on the whole system. And those people are going through life, wasting their lives. Knowing the grace setup is what's important. That's your prize in Christ.

Now, Satan tries to keep us in the dark concerning the features of our church age of grace. He keeps us from being instructed in doctrine relating to the church age. All Christians are required to learn the doctrines of Scripture. Undoubtedly, there are some people, who should be here tonight, who You beat him; you're here; and, you're going to be introduced to something that you know little about but is going to put a new awe in your soul, toward what it means when Paul says, "Don't let anybody rob you of your prize." We're going to define that prize, as you may have forgotten it.

**All Christians should Learn the Word of God**

All Christians need to learn the Word of God. Where? In church, first and foremost. That's what they should be able to receive when they come to church. And when you have an explanatory ministry, as we do here, you should appreciate it. Why? Because Jesus said in Matthew 4:4: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. You're not going to get much of the Word of God reading the Bible on your own. You will let you have some basic doctrinal structure. But then there's so much behind the English that, unless somebody points it out to you, like our word here "katabrabeuo" tonight, you don't fully appreciate what it is saying.

There's also 1 Peter 2:2: "Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the Word, that by it, you may grow in respect to salvation." So, the knowledge of church-age doctrine is our daily, spiritual food. It is further our source of maturity and happiness. You want to be happy.

Ephesians 4:15: "Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects unto Him, Who is the head of the church." You are to grow up as a Christian. You are not to be a little, puny Christian that can be pushed about with all kinds of incapacities by Satan.

Then notice 2 Peter 3:18: "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to Whom be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity."

So, the Word of God (church-age doctrine) is our daily spiritual food. It is our source that brings us spiritual maturity and happiness. And third, it fulfills a deficiency we all have in our soul. We're all born spiritually uninformed.

Colossians 1:9-10: "For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you, and ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will, in all spiritual wisdom and understanding." This word "knowledge" is not the ordinary knowledge ("gnosis"). That's information like you get in reading, writing, and arithmetic in school. This is "epignosis," which means knowledge that you have listened to, and you have said, "That's true. I believe it." And when you do, it clicks into your human spirit, and it is preserved there.

When some point of Scripture is explained to you, you may recoil from it, as a carnal Christian will, or a Christian who is out of fellowship with the Father. He's on his own track. You can have good Bible teaching, but it'll go nowhere with you in your life. Therefore, when you get in a tight squeeze, and you need some principle of doctrine, it never comes to your mind. The Holy Spirit has nothing with which to guide you. So, isn't it interesting that you are to be filled with *the full knowledge* of His will?

**A Spiritual Deficiency**

Verse 10: "So that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the full knowledge of God." So, there's a spiritual deficiency. We're not born with divine viewpoint. It comes from the Word.

Satan tries to keep us in the dark also, by causing us to mix in the Law features, from the dispensation of the Jews. That results in religion, based on human merit.

**The Four Divine Institutions**

He also encourages us to violate the four divine institutions. What are they? First of all, there is volition – Freedom of choice. That is the first one. God gave volition to Adam and Eve: "Eat of every tree in this garden. Choose to do that, and choose not to eat of that tree – the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Then there's the institution of marriage – marriage for the context of physical relationships. And it's one man to one woman, and it's the right man to his right woman.

Then there's the institution of family, within which children are reared, so that they do not grow up as little barbarians. Where the church comes in, along with the home, and the Christian school.

Then there is nationalism – the principle of political freedom (anti-socialism). The divine institution of nationalism is against the imposition of controls of the government. Just look what's happened in North Korea now. Can you imagine a man like Kim Jong Un who runs it all? He's a pagan man. He is a very corrupt man. I read an article about him the other day. He spent a fifth of one of the grants that has come to him from other nations to run a big party: one fifth of something like a million dollars – of the foreign aid that had come to him. This man can point to you, and you're dead. That is nationalism? No, that is exactly opposite to the Word of God. But if a nation does not know the Word of God, and the God of that Bible, you'll have your Saddam Hussein's.

Satan also try to undermine us by leading us to meet life in the power of our own, and our sin nature abilities, rather than by the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, John has a script for your part in life. You have a scene. And you have to know the Word of God, so that you can get up there, and perform your scene in a way that is approved to God.

**Your Prize**

So, what is your prize? Yes, it is in Christ Jesus. But that prize is the grace way of life that He has given us, and to which He introduces us in the church age. The Jews and their Mosaic Law never had this.

Here's what it means, first of all. And I preface this that this is your right as a Christian. And with every one of these, you must say, "I'll go with the grace way, or I'll go with the Mosaic Law way. Which are you going to choose?

**Positional Truth**

This first one is called positional truth. You have an understanding about a position that you have with God. 1 Corinthians 12:13 says, "For by one Spirit (one Holy Spirit) we were all baptized into one body." This is Holy Spirit baptism: "Whether Jews or Greek, whether slaves or free, all made to drink of one Spirit. The body is not many members." And he's talking about the church – the body of Christ.

So, every Christian at the point of salvation is placed in Christ. So, now that is your position. Are you going to be sinless? No. You should be a lot better. But when God looks at you, what does He see? Does He see your lack of integrity? Does He see your sinfulness? No. What does he see? He sees His Son. You're in Christ and you are as perfect in the eyes of God as is the Lord Jesus Christ. That's why we say sometimes, "How good do you have to be to go to heaven? You have to be as good as Jesus Christ. You have to have absolute righteousness. And that's what's imputed to you. That's your position. It is not your practice yet. It will be someday. But that is your position.

Boy, can you imagine what the poor Jew of the Old Testament, under the Mosaic Law, would have given to be in a position of that kind of perfect security, and the power that went with it? Romans 6:3 said, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?" When the Holy Spirit placed us into Christ, we benefited by all that payment on the cross that He made. It's just as if you had hung there yourself.

In Romans 8:38-39, Paul can say this. How can he say this? "I'm convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." This means, "I'm absolutely perfect. This cannot be taken from me, no matter what comes along in life, I'm an untouchable."

In Romans 8:1, he says, "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Isn't that's something? That is position of truth. Christianity, is a relationship to a person – the person of Jesus Christ. It is not a religion of rituals. It is not a religion of sacraments – doing things in order to gain merit with God.

In 1 Corinthians 6:11, Paul says, "And such were some of you. But you were washed (you were sanctified – you were set apart). You were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in the Spirit of God. What have you been set apart to? You're set apart to everything that Jesus Christ is. The Jew of the Old Testament was not in a person of the Godhead. The fact is that, in the Old Testament, the Jew is not viewed as the child of God.

Notice Psalm 34:22: "The Lord redeems the soul of his servants (speaking about Israel), and none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned." The Jews were servants of God. And that's the highest commendation they had.

However, now notice, for the Christian, Galatians 3:26. The contrast says this: "For we are all the sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." You're not just a servant. You are son or a daughter of God. You're in the family of God. That is positional truth. And to know that is a very exciting and wonderful thing – positional sanctification. How perfect are you in positional truth before God? Well, you're in Christ. That's what the baptism of the Holy Spirit does, which you experienced at the point of salvation. When it places you in Christ, you're as good as He is, in the sight of God – absolute righteousness.

**Saints**

The church believer, because he is set apart in this way, and he's place in Christ, is also called a saint. 1 Corinthians 1:2: "To the church of God which is at Corinth (the local church), to those who have been sanctified (set apart) in Christ Jesus by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, saints by calling, with all those, who in every place, call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ – His Lord and ours." You are a saint.

The Roman Catholic Church says that only certain people become saints – those who are super, super good in their works, and so on. They finally earn so much merit, that they do make it into heaven. They don't even have to go to purgatory. But most people in Catholicism are not viewed as saints. You can turn to the person next to you, and say, "Saint: St. Thomas; St. Gilmer; Mr. Bernard Root – St. Bernard; or, whatever. It is and appropriate title. You're a saint. Does that mean that you're holy in your conduct and your integrity – perfection?" No, it means positional truth.

Boy, is that a position to have? You are so secure. You can breathe a sigh of relief. The church age has started on the day of Pentecost. It's in full swing now. Instruction in the Word of God is available if you're fortunate to have a church where you can come to get it, and have the good sense to appreciate; to be there; to receive it; and, positive volition. It only takes a little negative volition. I see it all the time. Bingo! Some Christian, who has amounted to a lot, gets drifted off into the world system. Now he's out of the will of God, but positional truth has him in the saving relationship of God.

So, this is the first thing that you're going to protect. Do you want to go back to that old system of the Mosaic Law, where you never had any security of where you stood, instead of being in Christ, and knowing that you have positional security?

**The Union of all Believers in Christ**

However, wait a minute. There is more. Secondly, there is another thing that was never known under the Mosaic Law: the union of all believers in Christ. This is John 17:22-23. The union of all believers in Christ. Is that important, to be in union with all believers? How about when you decide you're going to get married, and you pick somebody who you're going to get married to. Is it alright to marry somebody who is not in union with you in Christ? If you do that, boy will you regret it? But all believers are in a union in Christ Jesus.

What are the implications of that? Now, here is a prize that you would never want to give up, and you'd never want to carelessly hand off to a legalistic way of life. And we shall look into that next Sunday morning.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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