

Easter Day: The Birth of God's Son

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[0 : 00] Well, let's pray before we come to God's Word. Gracious God, our Heavenly Father, as our hearts pulse with the thrill of the joy of the resurrection of our Saviour and all that that means for us, for our lives, for the Church, and indeed for this whole universe, we praise you and we thank you.

And we ask now that as we come to your Word you would fill us full of its glorious light and thrill us with a message that it might also fill our hearts and fill our praises and fill our proclamation too that many might hear and understand and rejoice with us in this, the greatest message in all the world. For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. I'd love you to turn up to Acts chapter 1 again if you would. Acts chapter 2 rather.

We're going to be looking at this but we are going to be doing something a little different from usual and that is ranging all around the Bible today. Normally we look at one passage in particular but I'm taking my example from Peter who in his sermon on Pentecost Day ranged all over the Bible and so we're going to do a little bit of that today and I hope you'll forgive me for it.

But really everything I'm going to say is here in Acts chapter 2 and if you want a text for today it's verse 24. God raised him up loosing the birth pangs of death.

[1 : 37] I want to speak to you this Easter morning about resurrection and rebirth. In fact, if you looked on our sheet today you'll see the title of the sermon is this Easter, the birth of God's Son.

I suspect you think I probably got confused here but like Bob did on Wednesday kept announcing to our Wednesday lunchtime congregation that there would be mince pies after the service.

He said it at the beginning and he said it again at the end. He's quite determined we're going to have mince pies. It wasn't mince pies, it was hot cross buns. He was confused with what we do at Christmas. And maybe you think I'm confused.

I've confused Easter with Christmas. Christmas is about the birth of Jesus. Christmas is about the death and the resurrection of Jesus. But I'm not confused because in fact in the New Testament all the apostles refer to the Easter message as being about the birth of the Son of God.

The birth of God's true Son. The one who was longed for from the very beginning from the time of Adam and Eve all through history. And now at last born into eternal life as the Son of God with power.

[2 : 54] As the Son of God with praise and honour and glory. That's what happened on that first Easter morning in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. So I want to think about three things that the Bible tells us about the resurrection of Jesus and what it brings to birth.

Or rather to new birth. And as I said they're all here in one way or another in Jesus in Peter's Pentecost sermon. First of all the new birth of the Christ God's true Son then the new birth of the whole creation God's true world and then finally the new birth of the church as God's true family. First of all then the new birth of the Christ the birth of God's true Son. Look again at verse 24. We're told God raised Jesus up loosing literally the birth pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

Now you can see there very plainly can't you that Jesus speaks Peter speaks of Jesus' resurrection as a birth as the end of painful labour pains.

That word translated in our Bible's pangs quite literally birth pangs. Used that way in 1 Thessalonians 5 verse 3 of labour pains of a pregnant woman.

[4 : 21] Or in Revelation chapter 12 verse 2 of a woman crying out in birth pains. Jesus himself uses that very same expression in Matthew chapter 25 verse 8 when he talks about the last days and the turmoil that there will be in the world as being the beginning of the birth pains.

Now we'll come back to that later because it's very important. But let's get Peter's point very clear. He's describing Jesus' emergence from the tomb of death as being the emergence from a womb of

death into life.

Because the womb of death could no longer hold him. He's born out of death into a risen glorious and deathless life.

It's a birth from the dead. That's what Easter Day is all about according to the New Testament. Of course the Apostle Paul and the Apostle John both use exactly that same language of Jesus don't they?

Paul says in Colossians 1 verse 18 he is the firstborn from the dead. In Revelation 1 verse 5 John receives his revelation from none other than Jesus Christ the faithful witness and firstborn from the dead.

[5 : 41] Jesus' resurrection was the birth of God's firstborn son. But what kind of son is this? Well notice verse 22 it's very clear that whoever was put to death was a man Jesus of Nazareth and this same man says verse 32 this Jesus God raised up and exalted at his right hand and made him verse 30 verse 36 both Lord and Christ.

Notice this Jesus this man that you crucified is exalted as Lord and Christ in other words as King and Messiah that is as God's glorious son his king and his heir the ruler over all creation. a man at last in the true image of God rules the universe at God's right hand. That's what Peter's saying.

Now I'm sure you get the significance of that don't you? I certainly hope you do if you've been listening to our series on Genesis on Sunday mornings. Who was God's first son? Were you all asleep all those weeks?

It was Adam wasn't it? Of course it was. If you don't believe me read Luke chapter 3 verse 38 at the end of that genealogy tells us plainly Adam the son of God. Adam was made in God's image.

[7 : 11] He was made to rule for God in glory over the whole cosmos wasn't he? But of course when Adam rebelled when Adam fell God lost his son and the curse of death was brought on the whole of creation.

Disaster was brought to all of God's world including Adam and Eve and all that came after him. And of course as we've been seeing in Genesis God didn't abandon his world.

He made a promise didn't he that there would be a new Adam a new man. One day the seed of the woman would triumph would at last reverse the curse destroy the serpent the enemy that had brought the destruction on the world and at last he would reign forever.

He would reign once again over God's world in praise and in honor and in glory forever. And that promise has at last been fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

He is exalted as Lord and Christ as the promised Messiah as the promised king of the whole world as God's true son in the flesh.

[8 : 23] You see here that Peter quotes from the psalms from Psalm 110 and from Psalm 2. And those psalms are all about God's son. In verse 34 it's explicit isn't it a quote from Psalm 110 but verse 36 also is referring to Psalm 2 that's all about God's true son.

The new Adam, the new man who would rule as Lord over all the universe. If you have any doubt about that turn over a few pages to Acts chapter 13 and I'll show you just the same thing coming not from Peter this time but from Paul.

This is Paul's great sermon in Acts chapter 13 and if you look down to verse 32 you'll see exactly what the gospel was for Paul. Acts 13 verse 32 and we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus as also it is written in the second psalm you are my son today today I have begotten you and that's the gospel says Paul. What God promised to the fathers verse 32 right from the beginning he has fulfilled to us by raising Jesus from the dead. At last God has a son in his true image.

not subject anymore to the curse of death because death could not hold him. Unlike all of Adam's offspring before do you remember Genesis chapter 5 Adam and Eve gave birth to a son in their own image Seth would he be the one that was promised?

[10 : 09] No. Seth lived and he died and his offspring and his offspring and his offspring and his offspring remember and he died and he died and he died all the way through but not Jesus.

Go back and read that other genealogy later on today in Luke chapter 3. The genealogy that begins with God's declaration from heaven at the baptism of Jesus.

You are my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. And immediately Luke gives us Jesus' genealogy going all the way back to Adam the son of God.

And he is showing us that here at last is the new Adam the true Adam the son of God with power over death. And that is the gospel that was proclaimed on Pentecost day. Do you remember how Paul himself summarizes his gospel at the very beginning of the letter to the Romans in Romans chapter 1 he says the gospel promised beforehand in the scriptures concerning his son descended from David according to the flesh but descended declared appointed the son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.

That is Jesus appointed as Christ and as Lord as the son of God with power. By his resurrection he was appointed as God's glorious son as the new Adam in praise and in glory and in honor forever.

[11:51] And that sums up what Paul speaks about all the way through that great letter to the Romans to the birth of a new age. The age of Adam has given way totally to the age of Christ.

The age of the flesh and of death has given way to the new age of the spirit and of life. Adam's age was the age of death that's what Paul says in Romans 5. Death reigned through one man Adam. But Christ's age is the new age of life. Christ being raised from the dead he says in Romans 6 verse 9 he will never die again because death no longer has dominion over him.

He's the son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead on Easter day. the birth pangs of death were loosed and a real man is reborn for the first time into that new age the age of the spirit the age of eternal life.

Now don't misunderstand that. Many people do misunderstand that so we need to be very careful. When we speak about the life of the flesh giving way to the life of the spirit we certainly don't mean something that was solid and bodily giving away to something that's just wispy and ethereal and ghost like.

[13:16] So many people think of that. So many people think about the afterlife as being a sort of shadowy existence in a disembodied state. That's the exact reverse of the truth that the Bible teaches.

That's the exact reverse of the gospel of Christ. The flesh life mortality as we know it is the shadow. It's the spirit life that's the true reality.

It's the spirit life brought in by Jesus that is the solid reality that lasts forever. C.S. Lewis understood that perhaps better than anybody. That's why he called this world the shadow lands.

It's the new world. It's the new world that is full of the glorious reality and solidity that makes this world look like nothing but a shadow. Don't look it up but just listen to what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 about this.

With the resurrection of the dead what is sown is perishable. It is raised imperishable. It is sown in dishonor. It's raised in glory.

[14:28] It's sown in weakness. It's raised in power. It's sown a natural body. It's raised the spiritual body. And you see from the earthly from the natural body to the spiritual body to the heavenly body is a transformation from the perishable to the imperishable.

From dishonor to glory. From weakness to power. It's from pale shadow to solid reality. From pale black and white if you like to glorious technicolor.

From two dimensional to three dimensional. dimensional. And that's exactly what we see isn't it? When you think about it in the accounts of Jesus' resurrection.

Wait a minute though you might be saying is that right? We read about the resurrection of Jesus. We read about a Jesus who passes through doors and walls who appears and disappears.

That surely sounds like he's lost his body. He's just a spirit. No that's wrong isn't it? He was quite solid wasn't he? He could be felt and touched his wounds and he could eat.

[15:40] He deliberately ate a meal of breakfast with his disciples didn't he? Hang on a minute. How could he pass through doors? How could he pass through walls? Well not because he was less solid and real than before but because he was more solid and more real.

More solid and real than anything else in this shadowy world that we live in. Now think about it for a minute. How can you walk through air? Well it's because you are more solid than air isn't it?

How can you walk through water? Well it's because you're more solid and more dense than water. And Jesus' resurrection body is more solid and more real and more lasting and more substantial than any single thing in this whole created world that we live in.

Because he's been reborn as the son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead into a new and a solid and a lasting and a wonderful humanity.

A manhood of praise and glory and honour for a world that is far more solid and substantial and wonderful than ever we've experienced in these shadow lands that we live in today.

[17 : 02] He's the firstborn of the true humanity. He's a man who will never die again because death no longer has the dominion over him.

See how wonderful that is. See the risen Jesus, think about this, the risen Jesus shows us what God's goal for human life was right from the beginning.

what it's always been and what it shall be now forever because of Jesus' resurrection. The risen Jesus shows us what true humanity is all about.

Deathless humanity. That's what the resurrection means for us. I want us to stop for a minute and ponder what that means as we sing hymn number 460 that speaks of the risen conquering son and the endless victory that he has won over death.

Number 460, glory to Jesus, risen conquering son. another. Even as we learn how him Amen.

[18 : 59] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

The risen conquering Son of God, the glorious Prince of Life, begotten in His resurrection from the dead, He reveals to us God's goal for human life.

We shall be like Him, deathless, solid, wonderfully reigning over this world. But the resurrection of Jesus does more than just that.

It reveals God's goal for the whole world of creation. The resurrection is also the rebirth of the creation. It's the birth of God's true world, the world that God always meant it to be.

[21 : 43] Verse 16 of Acts chapter 2. Peter begins his sermon by speaking about that. This, he says, is what the prophet Joel was talking about when he spoke of God pouring out His Spirit in the last days.

Days of wonder in the heavens above and the earth beneath, he says in verse 19. Days that culminate, he says in verse 20, in the great and magnificent day of the Lord.

Now that language is almost technical language in the Old Testament prophets. But the day of judgment. The great day of the revelation of God's righteousness.

His judging of all that is wrong and His setting to rights. Everything through recreation of the whole universe. It was a day often described as new birth through judgment.

When God would judge the old world and raise up a whole new cosmos. A world of righteousness and peace. Just like in the days of Noah. When the old world was destroyed and a new world was brought to birth.

[22 : 51] And many, many of the prophets speak about creation being reborn. Through a resurrection of rebirth. They use just that kind of language.

Listen for example to some of Isaiah's words. In that day Isaiah says, He will swallow up death forever. And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces.

Your dead shall live, their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, arise and sing for joy. For your Jew is a Jew of light. And the earth will give birth to the dead.

Isaiah 26 verse 19. Listen to some of his words from the last two chapters of his prophecy. About the new heavens and the new earth. Where death no longer reigns.

Where life instead reigns supreme. Where no more, says Isaiah, shall there be an infant who lives but a few days. Or an old man who does not fill out his days.

[23 : 51] Isaiah 65 verse 20. Don't you long for that world? We all long for that world. You long for that world, don't you?

You have had a child who's been buried and lived but a few days. You long for that world. If you've watched in this past year a loved one, a spouse or a beloved parent declining in health and indignity as their age has progressed.

Well, says the prophet, that day is coming. And a world where there will be no more alien intrusion of death and all the harbingers of death. The decrepitude that takes over our bodies.

They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain in that day, says the prophet. Because at last, well, there will be a new birth.

Dust, he says, shall be the serpent's food. That ancient serpent called the devil or Satan. He'll be crushed forever just as God promised. And therefore, because of that, because of the end of the curse, a whole new creation will be born.

[25 : 07] Listen to the language that Isaiah uses. He's talking about Zion, about God's holy place. Being in labor and bringing forth children. Shall I bring all this that I promised?

Shall I bring to the point of birth, says the Lord, and not cause her to bring forth? Shall I, who calls to bring forth, shut the womb, says your God? No. No.

All that he has promised will certainly come to pass. He will give birth, he says, to a new heavens and a new earth that will remain forever and ever. And that is what this is all about, says Peter on the day of Pentecost.

That great magnificent day of rebirth of the whole creation. It happens, it begins, in the new birth of God's true Son, the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Friends, don't miss the significance of all of that for us. See, Christ's resurrection in history, that historical fact, is the guarantee that all the wrong and all the injustice and all the sin and evil in this world will one day be put right forever.

[26 : 23] That's a great comfort to us, isn't it? It's a great comfort to you if you've lived a life and known great wrong, great hurt, great suffering at others' hands.

There's a day, says God, when all of that will be put right and it's guaranteed because of the resurrection of Jesus. It's a guarantee of all God's promises for the world.

That there will be a world without evil, without the curse, without sin and death. That it's coming absolutely for certain because of the resurrection of Jesus.

That's a great comfort to you, isn't it? It should be a great comfort to all of us as we sense the burden of decay in our own flesh and bones. Jesus' resurrection spells the beginning of the great rebirth of all things, of this whole creation, of all that we can see and a million things that we can't see.

But it is only the beginning of that birth process. It's not the end of it as it was for Jesus himself, bodily. Jesus tells us that plainly, by the way, back in Matthew chapter 24.

[27 : 42] I'm sure you remember. We quoted it earlier. He speaks of the last days. The days, that is, from his resurrection right up until his final coming in glory and the very last day of judgment.

And he says plainly to his disciples, you remember, that these will be days of great upheaval, great turmoil, just as Peter says here in Acts 2, quoting from Joel the prophet. But he says, all these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

Days of trouble and distress and persecution also for the church, for Christ's people. The terrible times that the whole New Testament tells us will characterize these days.

It's the beginning of these birth pains when Jesus rose from the dead. Why is that? If Jesus' resurrection is the end of the birth pains for him, why should it spell just the beginning of the birth pains for the whole creation?

Well, Jesus gives the answer to that too in Matthew 24, if you remember. He goes on to say, it's because the age of the last days is exactly the time when he says the gospel of the kingdom must be proclaimed to the whole world, to all nations and only then can the end come.

[29 : 08] Only then will the new creation burst forth at last from its womb into its glorious new life. Paul puts it that way also in Romans chapter 8.

Listen. The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. Now notice that. Not just the son of God, but the sons of God.

For the creation, he says, was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

For we know, he says, that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit grown inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

You see what he's saying? Only when all God's children, all of God's children, are revealed in their resurrection glory as true sons of God like Jesus, only then will the creation itself be reborn.

[30 : 28] Only when we receive our full adoption like Jesus did on resurrection morning, our full sonship, the resurrection of our bodies, only then will this whole creation be redeemed.

Why is that? That's because God doesn't want an empty new creation. That's why. And that brings me to the final point.

You see, the resurrection is the new birth of the Christ. It's the birth of God's true Son. And it's the beginning of the new birth of the creation of God's true world. But it's also all about the new birth of

the church.

It's the birth of God's true family. You see, Christ is the firstborn from the dead. Not the lastborn or the onlyborn. He doesn't rise to life just by himself to inhabit an empty world.

That's why it's so wrong, so totally wrong to have a view of heaven as though it was some place of eternal quiet and solitude. You know, like being on Desert Island Discs, a desert island somewhere just with a couple of books and your favourite music.

[31 : 38] Nobody else around. Although right now, sometimes that does sound quite like it would be heaven. But that's far from God's idea of the new creation.

Miles from it. Just think back to the first creation. Was the first Adam meant to be alone? No, he wasn't.

It's not good that he should be alone, says God. And in fact, God made man male and female. Why? So that they could be fruitful and multiply and fill the world. God doesn't want an empty world. He made the whole universe to be filled with glorious sons and daughters that he could have fellowship with and rejoice in. Just a few verses further on in Romans chapter 8.

Listen to this. We're told Jesus was raised to life in order that he might be the firstborn of many brothers. The new Adam, you see, he ushers in an age of resurrection for his whole family.

[32 : 43] That's what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 as well. As by a man, that's Adam, came death, by a man, that's Jesus, has come also the resurrection from the dead.

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. but, this is important, each in his own order. Christ, the firstfruits, and then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

You see, Jesus is the firstborn of many brothers, of many sons and daughters who will also be reborn as the children of the resurrection age, as sons and daughters of God, just like Jesus.

That's exactly the language Jesus uses, by the way, himself, in Luke chapter 20 verse 34. He speaks about those who attain the resurrection of the dead and he calls them sons of God, sons of the resurrection.

Jesus is the firstborn of many brethren. But he's also the first fruit, says Paul. That is, he's the first to achieve that glorious new life.

[33 : 52] The life of the spirit age, of praise and of glory and of honour, of human life, as it was destined to be by God. But he inaugurates, he brings in the beginning of that new age of eternal life by his spirit.

And that's what Peter means in verse 34 of Acts chapter 22 there, when he speaks of the risen Christ receiving the promised spirit of life himself and pouring it out on his church that they also in turn might likewise be reborn into eternal life.

Jesus' resurrection means new birth for all of Christ's church, his family. Jesus' resurrection likewise gives us sure and certain hope of our own rebirth by resurrection.

I want in closing just to look at one more place because it's made so plain and clear for us. I think it is worth looking up.

It's 1 Peter chapter 1. It's page 1014 I think in the visitor's Bibles. But it's the same Peter but now he's writing to the church that's persecuted and much discouraged.

[35 : 10] Churches scattered throughout Asia Minor. And he writes to them in their many struggles in their many hardships in their persecutions and trials.

He writes to encourage them in their struggle. And look what he writes at the beginning of his letter after the greeting. Look at verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy he has caused us to be born again into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable undefiled and unfading kept in heaven for you who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

See what he's saying? Jesus' resurrection wasn't just a new birth for him a new birth into the glory of eternal life it's a new birth for us into a certain hope of an inheritance he says that can't be defiled that can't fade away not ever it's a living hope that is it's not a vague wish it's not a like we use that word hope oh I hope it'll be sunny tomorrow no in the bible it's a certainty a living hope it's imperishable it's undefiled it's unfading says verse four verse four says it's kept in heaven for us by God and then verse five he says we're being kept by God's power for it couldn't be more certain than that could it God's keeping it for us and he's keeping us for it and notice he says that we have that pledge now in new birth by Christ's resurrection from the dead although he says we'll have new

bodies like

Christ in praise and honour and glory as verse seven says at Christ's return you see that new bodies now through his accomplished resurrection and new bodies then at his certain return see for Jesus his resurrection was the end of the birth pangs and he arose his body redeemed fully adopted begotten as God's son with power the first born son of the resurrection but his resurrection likewise begins our birth process and our birth pangs what Paul says in Romans 8 we groan inwardly as we await eagerly our adoption as sons the resurrection of our bodies but just as Christ's birth pangs were broken and death could not hold him so also it will be for us says

[38 : 09] Peter at the revelation of Jesus Christ and for us that's a certainty it's a living hope shall I bring to the point of birth and not bring forth says the Lord never Paul says he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ and we too shall be brought forth as Jesus was into a glorious new birth as Peter says in 1 Peter 1 verse 7 that results in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ and that's why he can say there in verse 6 that we can bear up even in all manner of grievous trials in the present that's why Peter says we can even rejoice in the midst of the most grievous trials that we can think of in this earthly life because we know that the certain historical fact of Jesus resurrection from the dead on the third day that was witnessed by

Peter who was totally sceptical at the beginning of course that fact has transformed our present suffering and transformed our approaching death into the gateway of an inheritance that is imperishable that is unfaithable that is undefiled that is kept in heaven for us and that will be revealed in us in a glorious resurrection life through Jesus Christ the womb of death we find ourselves living in in this mortal frame is transformed into the birth canal of a glorious life that will be everlasting everlasting on the day when our faith at last gives birth to glory and honor and praise in the presence of Jesus our firstborn our elder brother the one who has been through the birth pangs before us to show us the way friends if you understand that you understand what Easter is all about you understand why the resurrection of

Jesus from the dead has changed the world forever and has changed your world forever no matter what suffering you may be going through now no matter what suffering may come your way in the years of your life that remain no matter how harsh and bitter those pangs of death may seem for you and for some of us for some of us it's true isn't it that those birth pangs seem to stalk us from our earliest days right from the beginning right to the bitter end some of us have known birth pangs of great physical burdens that we bear or great psychological burdens or sexual burdens or emotional burdens or all kinds of things but no matter how grievous those pangs may be you know that they're birth pangs not death pangs and by them and through them and through often their bitter contractions that they seem to be you are by God's grace as Peter says in verse 9 you are obtaining the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls because he has caused us to be born again into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead

Easter is all about the birth into glory of the Christ of God's true son the firstborn from the dead and through him the firstborn of many brothers it's about the birth into glory of a church of God's true family and it's about the glorious rebirth of the whole creation the new world where all of us who love him will dwell forever with him the resurrection of Jesus is the great birth the great rebirth of everything loosing the birth pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it I guess you really would think I'm mixed up if we sang a Christmas carol to end with on Easter day I was very tempted but we won't but I'm going to read you a verse because it sums up so well the message of Easter listen hail the heaven born prince of peace hail the son of righteousness light and life to all he brings risen with healing in his wings born that man no more may die born to raise the sons of earth born to give them second birth it's the message of

Christmas but how much more it's the message of Easter and the glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ for death could not hold him but he burst forth in glorious day to show the way for every one of us through the birth pangs of death into the glorious rebirth of a life that is eternal well that's the message of Easter and we're going to sing it now in number 960 in our hymn books in resurrection bodies like Jesus very own we'll rise to meet our saviour in joy around his throne we'll marvel at the mercy that bids poor sinners come be welcomed at his table and share his heavenly home all because Jesus rose on the third day number 960 again how down while juveniles song on the

[44 : 51] Jeep morning forAutine and album releasesogenic patients by ■■ qui says to Depois
Cold 2002 seasonal Nothing As Eve went i■cy Amen.

Amen. Amen.

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Amen.