THE QUESTION

What did the early church teach about evangelism and spreading the gospel?

Asked by a THF member on April 9, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 13 numbered quotations · the 22 early Christian passages and 138 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/what-did-the-early-church-teach-about-evangelism-and-spreading-the-gospel

The short answer *From the text: says what the passages say*

These early writers saw evangelism as Christ's own command: go to all nations, preach the gospel, teach, and baptize. The apostles preached the kingdom of God, founded churches in every city, and appointed leaders. Christians after them still felt bound to preach everywhere, and they credited the gospel's spread to God's power, even amid persecution.

LIBRARY ONLY	This study was written only from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed at the back, with a link to read it.
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POINT 1 OF 8

Christ sent his followers to all nations

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Tatian's harmony of the Gospels gathers Jesus' parting command: preach, teach, and baptize everyone. Tertullian says Jesus ended his mission the same way, sending the apostles to preach his gospel to every nation.

1 “Go now into all the world, and preach my gospel in all creation; and teach all the peoples, and baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; and teach them to keep all that I commanded you.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tatian,** *Diatessaron* 55 (c. 150–180 AD) **Source 6, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

2 “Even at the end, He taught us the same truth about His mission when He sent out His apostles to preach His gospel among all nations.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *Against Marcion* 40 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 15, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 8

Jesus himself went from town to town

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

In Tatian's Gospel harmony, Jesus refuses to stay where the crowds wanted him. He moves on to other towns because preaching the kingdom is the reason he was sent.

3 “Let us go into the nearby villages and towns, so that I may preach there also; for this is why I came."”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tatian,** *Diatessaron* 7 (c. 150–180 AD) **Source 5, page 7** Read it in the library ›
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POINT 3 OF 8

The apostles preached with the Spirit's power

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Clement of Rome says the apostles went out only after the resurrection had assured them and the Holy Spirit had filled them. Irenaeus likewise says they carried the good news to the ends of the earth.

4 "Having received their orders, and being fully assured by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and established in the word of God, with full assurance of the Holy Ghost, they went forth proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Source 22, page 8** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

5 "They traveled to the ends of the earth, spreading the glad tidings of the good things sent from God to us, and proclaiming the peace of heaven to people, all of whom have the Gospel of God equally and individually."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book III* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 9, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 4 OF 8

Preaching led to new churches and leaders

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

For Tertullian, evangelism did not stop with a sermon. The apostles founded churches as they went and carried the same faith from Judea to the nations. Clement adds that they appointed their first converts as leaders.

6 "After first bearing witness to the faith in Jesus Christ throughout Judea, and founding churches there, they next went out into the world and preached the same doctrine of the same faith to the nations."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On Prescription Against Heretics* 20 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 14, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

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7 “Thus, preaching through countries and cities, they appointed the first-fruits of their labors, having first proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of those who would later believe.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Source 22, page 8** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 5 OF 8

Later Christians were also bound to preach

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Tertullian applies the call to the church of his own day. The way to the Gentiles is open to all believers, he says, and no city is left out.

8 “So we preach throughout all the world. Indeed, no special care has even been laid on us for Israel, except that we also are bound to preach to all nations.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *De Fuga in Persecutione* 6 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 12, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 6 OF 8

The message centered on God and his Son

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Irenaeus points to Peter's preaching to Cornelius as a model of what the apostles taught. Cornelius already feared God, but Peter went on to tell him about Jesus, whom God anointed with the Holy Spirit.

9 “From the words of Peter, spoken in Caesarea to Cornelius the centurion and the Gentiles with him, to whom the word of God was first preached, we can understand what the apostles preached, the nature of their message, and their understanding of God.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book III* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 8, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
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POINT 7 OF 8

God's power, not human skill, spread it

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

Origen marvels that the faith spread so fast even though its teachers were few and plain men. He sees this as a sign that God was at work, not human cleverness.

10 "And this result is even more surprising because its teachers themselves were neither men of skill nor very numerous. Yet these words are preached throughout the whole world, so that Greeks and Barbarians, wise and foolish, adopt the doctrines of the Christian religion."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Origen,** *De Principiis (On First Principles)* 4.1 (c. 215–254 AD) **Source 18, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

11 "So in answer to statements like these, I say that it is clear to all who are able to make an intelligent and fair examination of the history of the apostles of Jesus, that it was with the help of a divine power that these men taught Christianity and succeeded in leading others to embrace the word of God."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Origen,** *Against Celsus* 62 (c. 215–254 AD) **Source 17, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 8 OF 8

The gospel grew even through persecution

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Origen notes the faith kept growing while believers were tortured, robbed, and killed. Church rules in the Apostolic Constitutions warn that denying Christ to escape hatred means being denied by him.

12 "It made progress through the punishment and death of its worshippers, through the plundering of their goods, and through every kind of torture they endured."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Origen,** *De Principiis (On First Principles)* 4.1 (c. 215–254 AD) **Source 18, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

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13 "Whoever denies Me before men, and is ashamed of My name, I also will deny and be ashamed of him before My Father who is in heaven.""

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER
Apostolic Constitutions (c. 250–380 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 21, page 7 **Read it in the library ›**

THE LIMITS

What these passages don't tell us

- These passages speak mostly of the apostles' mission; they give few practical methods for ordinary believers sharing their faith.
- They do not describe how evangelism was organized in each local church.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 22 early Christian passages and 138 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–22, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 23–89, in Bible order), then 71 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are in THF's updated English unless marked "1885 English" (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). "… [continues online]" marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *22 passages from 9 writers*

Justin Martyr, *c. 130–165 AD · sources 1–4*

1. *First Apology* (1885 English; on point 7) "from Jerusalem there went out into the world, men, twelve in number, and these illiterate, of no ability in speaking: but by the power of God they proclaimed to every… [continues online] **read ›**
2. *First Apology* (1885 English; on point 1) "find it also predicted that certain persons should be sent by Him into every nation to publish these things, and that rather among the Gentiles [than among the Jews] men… [continues online] **read ›**
3. *Dialogue with Trypho* (1885 English; on point 3) "being thus persuaded, they went into all the world, and taught these truths… [continues online] **read ›**
4. *First Apology* (on point 3) But when the Spirit of prophecy speaks of things that are about to happen as if they have already taken place—as can be seen even in the passages I have… [continues online] **read ›**

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Tatian, *c. 150–180 AD · sources 5–7*

5 *Diatessaron* 7 **Quote 3, page 2** “1:35 Early that morning, he went out very early to a deserted place, and there he was praying. Mark 1:36 Simon and those who were with him searched… [continues online] **read ›**

6 *Diatessaron* 55 (1885 English) **Quote 1, page 2** “now into 6 all the world, and preach my gospel in all the creation… [continues online] **read ›**

7 *Diatessaron* 41 (1885 English; on point 1) “13:10 But first must my gospel be preached unto all 46 nations… [continues online] **read ›**

Irenaeus, *c. 175–202 AD · sources 8–10*

8 *Against Heresies: Book III* (1885 English) **Quote 9, page 4** “From the words of Peter, therefore, which he addressed in Cæsarea to Cornelius the centurion, and those Gentiles with him, to whom the word of God was first preached, we… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *Against Heresies: Book III* (1885 English) **Quote 5, page 3** “their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter… [continues online] **read ›**

10 *Against Heresies: Book III* was also appointed by apostles in Asia to be the bishop of the Church in Smyrna. I saw him in my early youth, for he lived a very long time… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · source 11*

11 *Stromata* 1.18 (on point 7) in the Acts of the Apostles you will find this, word for word: "Those then who received his word were baptized… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 12–16*

12 *De Fuga in Persecutione* 6 **Quote 8, page 4** mission was to preach first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Therefore, so that this preaching might be fully accomplished among those among whom it had first… [continues online] **read ›**

13 *Against Marcion* 20 (1885 English; on point 1) “sends forth His disciples to preach the kingdom of God… [continues online] **read ›**

14 *On Prescription Against Heretics* 20 (1885 English) **Quote 6, page 3** “it is on this account only that they will be able to deem themselves apostolic, as being the offspring of apostolic churches… [continues online] **read ›**

15 *Against Marcion* 40 (1885 English) **Quote 2, page 2** “to the last He taught us (the same truth of His mission), when He sent forth His apostles to preach His gospel among all nations… [continues online] **read ›**

16 *Against Marcion* 40 (on point 1) “feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, that bring good tidings of good," Isaiah 52:7, even proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles, because He also says, "In… [continues online] **read ›**

Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · sources 17–19*

17 *Against Celsus* 62 **Quote 11, page 5** concerning the divinity of His teaching would not have shown itself. For if the teaching and the preaching had consisted in persuasive speech and well-arranged words, then faith too… [continues online] **read ›**

18 *De Principiis (On First Principles)* 4.1 **Quotes 10, 12, page 5** “again: "This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached among all nations… [continues online] **read ›**

19 *Against Celsus* 65 (1885 English) “imagines, however, that we utter these exhortations for the conversion of sinners, because we are able to gain over no one who is really good and righteous, and therefore open… [continues online] **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · source 20*

20 *Treatises* (1885 English; on point 1) “this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached through all the world, for a testimony to all nations… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · source 21*

21 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) **Quote 13, page 6** what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul… [continues online] **read ›**

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Clement of Rome · *source 22*

22 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Quotes 4, 7, pages 3, 4** "Thus, preaching through countries and cities, they appointed the first-fruits of… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *67 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

23 **Genesis 45:7** For God sent me ahead of you to keep a remnant of you on the earth, and to nourish a great remnant of you. **read ›**

24 **Numbers 31:40** and human beings, sixteen thousand, and their tax for the Lord, thirty-two persons. **read ›**

25 **1 Chronicles 16:23** Sing to the Lord, all the earth; proclaim his salvation from day to day. **read ›**

26 **Proverbs 3:9** Honor the Lord from your righteous labors, and give him firstfruits from your fruits of righteousness, **read ›**

27 **Proverbs 5:21** For the ways of a man are before the eyes of God, and he watches all his tracks. **read ›**

28 **Proverbs 11:30** From the fruit of righteousness grows a tree of life, but the souls of the lawless are taken away before their time. **read ›**

29 **Proverbs 14:19** The evil will fall before the good, and the ungodly will wait at the doors of the righteous. **read ›**

30 **Ecclesiastes 9:17** The words of the wise are heard in quietness more than the cry of those in power in foolishness. **read ›**

31 **Isaiah 13:15** For whoever is caught will be overcome, and those who are gathered together will fall by the sword. **read ›**

32 **Isaiah 15:3** Wrap yourselves in sackcloth in her squares, and lament on her rooftops and in her lanes; all of you, wail with weeping. **read ›**

33 **Ezekiel 3:2** And he opened my mouth and fed me the scroll. **read ›**

34 **Daniel 9:3** And I set my face toward the Lord God, to seek earnestly by prayer and pleas, with fastings and sackcloth. **read ›**

35 **Habakkuk 3:5** Before his face a word will go, and it will go out into the plains; **read ›**

36 **Haggai 1:2** 'Thus says the Lord Almighty: This people says, "The time has not come to build the house of the Lord."'" **read ›**

37 **1 Esdras 9:38** And the whole multitude gathered together in the open square before the gate of the temple toward the east, **read ›**

38 **Tobit 12:22** And they acknowledged his great and wonderful works, and how the angel of the Lord had appeared to them. **read ›**

39 **Wisdom of Sirach 37:17** The trace of a change of heart: **read ›**

40 **Baruch 5:3** For God will show your splendor to every land under heaven. **read ›**

41 **1 Maccabees 3:9** His name became known to the end of the earth, and he gathered together those who were perishing. **read ›**

42 **1 Maccabees 5:21** So Simon went into Galilee and fought many battles with the nations, and the nations were crushed before him. **read ›**

43 **1 Maccabees 14:19** And these were read before the assembly in Jerusalem. **read ›**

44 **2 Maccabees 3:34** And you, having been flogged by him, report the mighty power of God to all." And when they had said this, they vanished. **read ›**

45 **2 Maccabees 9:17** and besides all this, he would become a Jew and would go through every inhabited place proclaiming the power of God. **read ›**

46 **2 Maccabees 15:10** And when he had roused their spirits, he gave his orders, at the same time pointing out the faithlessness of the nations and their breaking of oaths. **read ›**

47 **4 Maccabees 13:15** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

48 **4 Maccabees 15:3** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

49 **Matthew 10:7** As you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand!' **read ›**

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50 **Matthew 16:26** For what does a man gain if he gains the whole world but loses his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? **read ›**

51 **Matthew 23:15** Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel over sea and dry land to make one convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. **read ›**

52 **Matthew 24:14** This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end shall come. **read ›**

53 **Mark 1:14** Now after John was taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, **read ›**

54 **Mark 1:15** and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand! Repent, and believe in the gospel.” **read ›**

55 **Mark 2:2** Immediately many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even around the door; and he spoke the word to them. **read ›**

56 **Mark 6:12** They went out and preached that people should repent. **read ›**

57 **Mark 13:10** The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. **read ›**

58 **Mark 16:15** He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. **read ›**

59 **Luke 4:19** to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” **read ›**

60 **Luke 8:1** Soon afterward he went through cities and villages, proclaiming and preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, **read ›**

61 **Luke 9:2** He sent them out to preach God’s kingdom and to heal the sick. **read ›**

62 **John 3:23** John also was baptizing in Enon near Salim because there was much water there. People came and were baptized; **read ›**

63 **Acts 2:41** Then those who gladly received his word were baptized. There were added that day about three thousand souls. **read ›**

64 **Acts 8:4** Therefore those who were scattered went about preaching the word as the gospel. **read ›**

65 **Acts 8:25** So after testifying and speaking the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem and preached the gospel in many Samaritan villages. **read ›**

66 **Acts 11:19** So those scattered by the distress that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word only to Jews. **read ›**

67 **Acts 11:20** But some of them, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, came to Antioch and spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus. **read ›**

68 **Acts 13:5** When they were at Salamis, they proclaimed God’s word in the Jewish synagogues. They also had John as their attendant. **read ›**

69 **Acts 13:43** When the synagogue gathering broke up, many of the Jews and devout converts followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them to continue in the grace of God. **read ›**

70 **Acts 13:49** The Lord’s word was spread abroad throughout all the region. **read ›**

71 **Acts 14:7** There they preached the gospel. **read ›**

72 **Acts 14:22** strengthening the souls of the disciples and urging them to continue in faithfulness, saying that through many troubles we must enter the kingdom of God. **read ›**

73 **Acts 14:27** When they arrived and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. **read ›**

74 **Acts 15:3** So, sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles and bringing great joy to all the brothers. **read ›**

75 **Acts 20:21** testifying to both Jews and Greeks about repentance toward God and faithfulness toward our Lord Jesus. **read ›**

76 **Acts 26:18** to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, and receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those sanctified by faithfulness toward me.’ **read ›**

77 **Acts 28:31** preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, unhindered. **read ›**

78 **Romans 1:16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, because it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first, and also for the Greek. **read ›**

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79 **Romans 2:9** trouble and anguish upon every human soul who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek; **read ›**

80 **Romans 5:20** The law came in that the trespass might abound; but where sin abounded, grace abounded more exceedingly, **read ›**

81 **Romans 7:2** For the woman that has a husband is bound by law to the husband while he lives, but if the husband dies, she is discharged from the law of the husband. **read ›**

82 **1 Corinthians 5:3** For I, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged the one who has done this, as though I were present, **read ›**

83 **1 Corinthians 9:16** For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast about, for necessity is laid on me; but woe is to me if I do not preach the gospel. **read ›**

84 **1 Corinthians 15:1** Now I declare to you, brothers, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which you also stand, **read ›**

85 **2 Corinthians 10:16** so as to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, without boasting in work already done in another's field. **read ›**

86 **Philippians 3:4** though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: **read ›**

87 **James 5:20** let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins. **read ›**

88 **1 Peter 1:9** receiving the goal of your faithfulness, the salvation of your souls. **read ›**

89 **Revelation 14:6** I saw an angel flying in midheaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language, and people. **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *71 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Genesis 1:6

1 Chronicles 16:31

Isaiah 2:3 · 60:17 · 63:3

Micah 4:1

Zechariah 9:9 · 13:7

Matthew 4:19 · 5:6 · 9:37 · 10:3 · 10:5 · 10:17 · 10:23 · 10:28 · 10:33 · 10:37 · 28:19

Mark 3:18 · 4:34 · 7:9 · 16:9 · 16:17

Luke 4:20 · 9:1 · 9:7 · 9:10 · 9:21 · 9:22 · 9:24 · 9:26 · 10:16 · 11:23 · 12:47 · 12:50 · 16:16 · 17:25 · 24:47

John 1:8 · 1:14 · 6:13 · 20:22

Acts 1:1 · 1:8 · 1:15 · 13:46 · 15:5 · 21:13

Romans 1:14 · 9:14 · 12:12

1 Corinthians 1:3 · 1:19 · 1:21 · 2:4 · 5:5 · 6:10 · 9:25

2 Corinthians 5:17

Galatians 1:6 · 1:7 · 1:8 · 1:11 · 3:27

Ephesians 4:2 · 4:24 · 4:28

Philippians 1:18

Titus 2:14

1 John 2:27

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Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “What did the early church teach about evangelism and spreading the gospel?” on April 9, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

Library only. This study was written only from The Historic Faith’s library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed above, with a link to read it.

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How to cite this study. The Historic Faith, “What did the early church teach about evangelism and spreading the gospel?” Early Church Questions, published November 9, 2026, https://thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/what-did-the-early-church-teach-about-evangelism-and-spreading-the-gospel. To cite one quotation, add its number and source, for example “quote 1, source 6.”

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THE END OF THIS STUDY