

# The return of Jesus in early Christianity

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## The return of Jesus in early Christianity

Intense eschatological consciousness is no aberration in the history of Christianity. Patterned beliefs and expectations regarding the end of history have played a formative role in Christian theology from the very beginning. And yet beliefs have varied widely, and still do, as anyone who has tried...

Full description

**Other Authors:** Brown, Alexandra R. (Other); Carroll, John T. 1954-; Setzer, Claudia J. (Other); Siker, Jeffrey S. (Other)

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## Summary:

Intense eschatological consciousness is no aberration in the history of Christianity. Patterned beliefs and expectations regarding the end of history have played a formative role in Christian theology from the very beginning. And yet beliefs have varied widely, and still do, as anyone who has tried to teach a class on the book of Revelation can testify. The aim of this book is to help sort out the issues by showing how the New Testament and other early Christian writings depicted the return of Jesus and other end-times topics. Further light is shed by descriptions of the first-century Jewish context and later developments in Christian thinking. The goal is not to construct a systematic eschatology for today that will convince everyone-an impossible task-but to understand the diversity of Christian teaching by illuminating the historical, social, and theological settings of the early Christian writings on the topic. The irreducible diversity of Christian eschatology does not render it irrelevant. To the contrary, it remains essential to Christian theology, which must proclaim the ongoing participation of the people of God in God's work of creation and redemption even as they await the full realization of the divine purposes for this broken world. - In *The Return of Jesus in Early Christianity*, John T. Carroll and three other scholars describe the origins of this hope in ancient Christian writings and its persistence to the present. Chapters on the New Testament explore the theme of the parousia, or return, of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts, in the writings of Paul (a chapter by Alexandra R. Brown), in the Johannine writings, and in the Catholic Epistles. Jeffrey S. Siker describes Christian hope for Jesus' return in the two hundred years after the last New Testament books were written. Claudia J. Setzer relates the Christian hope to Jewish messianic expectations. A final chapter surveys key developments from Augustine through the Reformation to North American developments. Carroll concludes that even at the end of the twentieth century, Christian theology is irreducibly eschatological. Eschatology has enjoyed a checkered career in the history of Christian theology. Many "enlightened" circles looked with disfavor on the belief that the world would soon end and the Messiah Jesus would return to deliver the faithful and judge God's enemies. During the closing years of the twentieth century, however, a remarkable combination of religious and secular forces sparked a resurgence of apocalyptic enthusiasm. Eschatological sensibility was boosted by fears of ecological disaster or nuclear war, interpretations of the prophetic significance of the reappearance of the state of Israel, and the turning of the millennium.

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In the New Testament, Jesus is crucified, dies, is buried within a tomb, and resurrected (came back to life) three days later. Christians celebrate the resurrection at Easter. Easter and Christmas are the most important Christian holidays. Christians believe that Jesus is the son of God. They believe that the best proof of this is that he came back to life after his death. In Christian theology, the death, resurrection, and return to heaven of Jesus are the most important events of the Christian faith. The resurrection of Jesus, or anastasis, is the Christian belief that God raised Jesus on the third day after his crucifixion at Calvary as first of the dead, starting his exalted life as Christ and Lord. In Christian theology, the death and resurrection of Jesus are the most important events, a foundation of the Christian faith, and commemorated by Easter. For Christians, his resurrection is the guarantee that all the Christian dead will be resurrected at Christ's second coming. For the Christian

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