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# 基督教简史

## The Concise History of Christianity

R. Dean Peterson



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# **The Concise History of Christianity**

R. Dean Peterson

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# 序

## ——在未来来临之前

基督的第三个千年刚刚开始,但我们已经能预感到这将是剧变夹杂着挑战的时代。这个世界被发达的运输和通讯体系迅速络合为一个“地球村”,不同文化和宗教的人群被麇集到一起。这种近切的联系经常触动我们固有的是非观念和宗教信仰。与此同时,我们发现我们的经济和政治也前所未有地紧密联系在一起,所有民族都被纳进这个行星规模的社区里,国家越来越难以单独左右经济和政治进程。似乎那种超越于我们任何人之上的力量在驱使我们朝着我们还无法了解的目的行进。不论是在富国,还是在穷邦,所有人都在忧心忡忡地等待着未来。

越是众心忧惶的时代,人们越愿回顾往昔,以窥知现世的去向和将来的确定性,而宗教传统就经常是这种回顾和探求的归宿。这种倾向是很自然的。不过,大多数人对自己的宗教信仰谱系并不了然,故而也容易受到误导,隔蔽于自己的世俗和宗教传统。

这版《基督教简史》就是想弥合现代人与他们的传统之间的知识裂缝,尤其是对那些对基督教历史所知甚少、甚至根本一无所知的读者,是该书初衷所在。所以作者用语简易,风格直白,生僻的术语和专名在文中和术语附表里都有注释,还提供了梳理观点和结构发展历程的索引。

该书一如既往地强调“历史流”的概念,就是找到不同时代的事件和变化之间的内在关联。

该版的另外一个优点就是针对东方传统背景的读者增加了一些内容,像各个宗教阶段的历史地图,各个宗教阶段内详尽的年表,每个单元的导言中提供的宗教发展的政治、经济和社会背景。

这本简单的宗教史并没有特别大的企图,其主旨就是引导读者鉴以往而知其来。

编者

二〇〇二年八月十五日

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## Introduction



*Jesus teaching in a synagogue*



This book examines a religion that is both old and new. Christianity is old because it has a history of almost 2000 years. Millions of men and women have lived and died according to its principles through the ages. At the same time, it is relatively new when compared to other great religions of the world. Christianity is a living religion that is continually being reformed.

We also will explore the history of the Christian church.<sup>1</sup> We examine dates, places, people, and ideas that have played roles in the development of Christianity. More important, the book tries to give a feel for history and the historical process. History is what has happened to people, institutions, or countries in the past. The **historical process** refers to the interactions among people, places, and events throughout history. This book focuses on the development of Christian thought and the church as an institution. We need a basic understanding of these developments before we can grapple with the complex issues of church history and then properly assess contemporary conflicts in the Christian community.

This chapter introduces the study of history and the historical setting of early Christianity. To clarify the relation of the church to the historical process, we discuss a Christian view of history, examine how historians may help in the discovery of the Christian past, and offer some thoughts on the study of church history. We then turn to a brief outline of Jewish history and to the Roman and Jewish worlds in which Jesus lived.

## CHRISTIANITY AND HISTORY

Modern historical writing attempts to present history as “objective facts.” It tries to describe actual events and persons. This scientific approach is less than two hundred years old. Most introductory students believe *all* history, including religious history, is written from an objective viewpoint. In fact, until recent times, most histories were written with little regard for factual history. Many were written to prove specific points. The accuracy of material was secondary to what the writers were trying to prove. If we are to recover the “facts,” we must take care to sort out fact from interpretation. To do this, it is important to understand the assumptions of writers who present historical materials.

Christianity has operated on some basic religious assumptions about history. These assumptions underlie the Bible and many other Christian writings. Christianity, like Judaism, presents a **linear view of history**, which means that history has a definite beginning and will reach a definite end. For Christians, history originates with God and moves toward the goal that he has established. History also is the stage on which God reveals himself. The Christian faith