

The Season of Advent

Theme:

Anticipating the Coming of the Lord

Dates:

Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas and ends at sundown on the day before Christmas.

Colors:

In most churches, the decorations are purple or blue; royal colors to welcome the King.

The East:

Orthodox churches do not have an Advent Season. Instead, they have a Lenten season lasting from 15 November through 24 December.

Advent originated as a period during which converts prepared themselves for baptism through instruction, prayer, fasting, and reflection, much like [Lent](#). The length of Advent varied from three days to six weeks—six weeks being approximately 40 days, the length of time that Jesus spent in the wilderness preparing for His ministry.

The Western Church

The general topic of Advent is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

In the west during the Middle Ages, Advent became a time to prepare for the Second Coming, because in those days, many people were convinced that all the signs pointed to the imminent return of Christ. In time, Advent spread throughout the western Church and became fixed at its present length. Over the last fifty years, Advent has come to anticipate the Nativity as well. For many people today, especially retailers, Advent is just a ramp-up to Christmas. In most churches, the Bible readings and sermons during Advent include prophecies of the birth of Christ, but primarily concern the Second Coming, judgment, and eternal rewards for obedient Christians.

Advent consists of the four Sundays preceding Christmas. If 24 December is a Sunday, it is the fourth Sunday in Advent until sundown, when the liturgical day begins, then it is Christmas Eve.

The Eastern Church

The Eastern Church does not have a season of Advent, in the western sense. It retains the original forty-day period of fasting, prayer, and reflection.

Roughly speaking, the Western Church consists of Protestants, Catholics, and Anglicans. The Eastern Church consists of the Eastern Orthodox churches, the Oriental Orthodox churches, and the eastern-rite churches affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church.