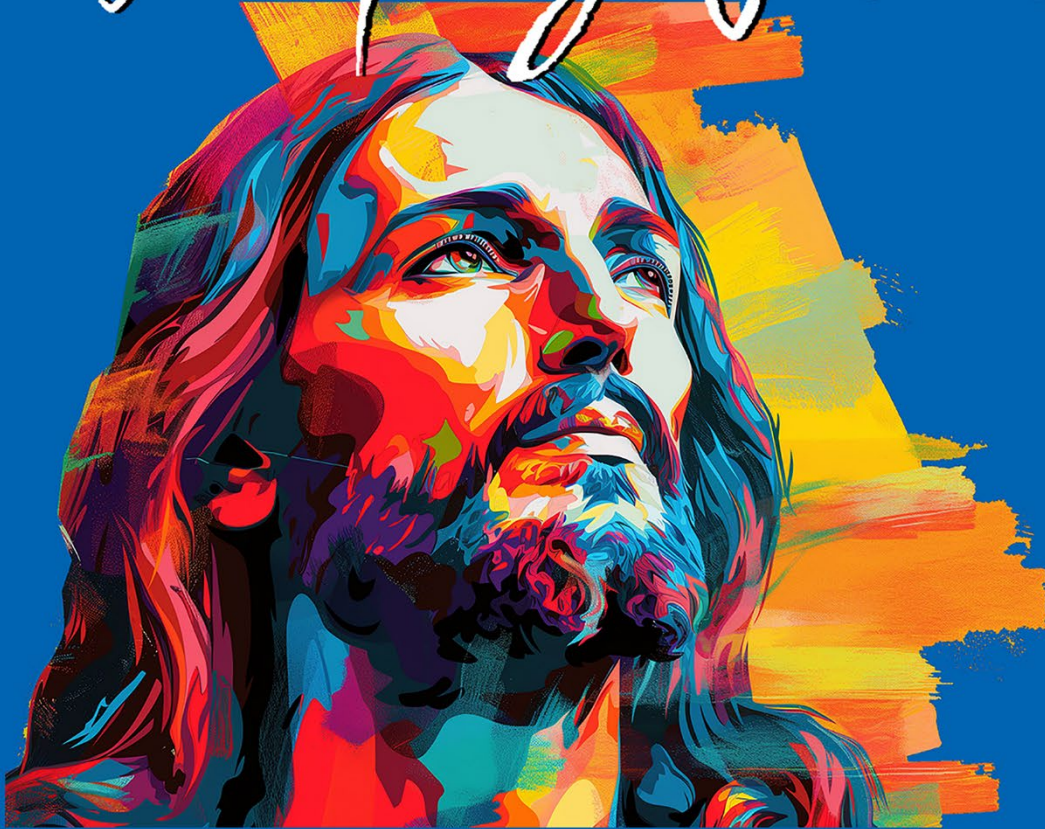


Finding Jesus



Embracing the Complete
Gospel of Jesus, the Christ.

Study Guide

CHARLES S. STUART

Let's Just Imagine!

Let's just imagine what might happen in our family, community, church, nation, and world if all believers **KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH!** helped usher in the

When people embrace their role in the Kingdom of God here on earth, their **EYES, EARS, MIND, HANDS, FEET & VOICE** will be used to reflect their faith.

They will use their **EYES** to look for needs that are unmet, and to watch over those in positions of authority.

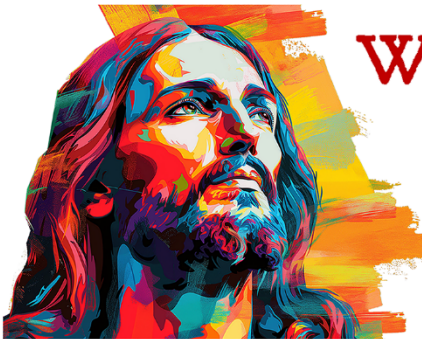
They will use their **EARS** to listen for the cries of those in pain, and to hear and address comments that demean those in need.

They will use their **MIND** to think of ways to get involved and to question for themselves what God would have them do for Him.

They will use their **HANDS** to do what is needed, remembering that it is through their hands that Jesus touches the "least of these."

They will use their **FEET** to go where needed...overseas, across the street or into the voting booth...to bring the Kingdom of God to those in need.

They will use their **VOICE** to speak up and out for those without a voice, and to hold those with power accountable to remember "the least of these" when making decisions.



**Wouldn't it be lovely to live
in a world like that!?!**

Charles Stuart

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About the Author.

Charlie Stuart was raised in the church by faithful, loving parents whose lives of service to “the others” inspired Charlie and his five siblings to purpose their lives to serve others, particularly the “least of these.”



Charlie has been active in the local church all his life serving as: Deacon, adult Bible study leader (20+ years), member of a pastor search committee and all the other committees in the local church.

Charlie graduated from the University of Florida in 1973 with an undergraduate degree in Marketing, with a focus on Economics. He worked in the family's office products company for 16 years and spent the following 20 years as a professional speaker, author, and consultant.

He also made time to volunteer for 25+ years with the YMCA as a local board member and on national task forces for the YMCA of the USA.

Charlie and his wife Barbara have three grown children and six grandchildren. They live in Orlando (College Park), Florida.

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Introduction.

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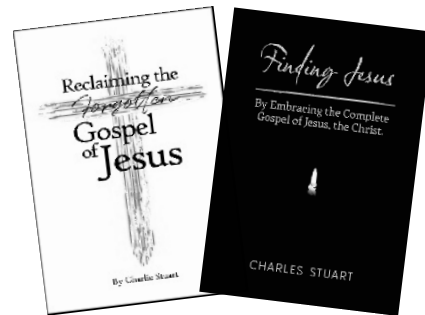
Greetings, in the name of the complete Gospel of Jesus, the Christ.

The Church Lost Jesus. It's Not Too Late to Find Him.

This study guide addresses the two statements above and is written primarily to pastors of Protestant churches in America... particularly those who identify with the Evangelical movement.

Secondarily, it is written to denominational leaders as well as others who offer thought-leadership on the church as it evolves toward “ushering in the Kingdom of God on Earth.”

As an author of two books, I have researched extensively why one-half of Protestant churches in America mostly ignore, or in some cases, reject, what Jesus said, taught, and did before His death...they have “lost Jesus.”



This is serious. We must recognize that what Jesus taught, commanded, said, and did before His death is as much a part of the Gospel as is salvation based on His resurrection.

The Conundrum of the Salvation Gospel of the Christ and Embracing the Gospel of Jesus.

I believe the “whole” Gospel has two parts — the Gospel of the Christ (Salvation) and the Gospel of Jesus. This why I call it The Complete Gospel of Jesus, the Christ.

The Gospel of Jesus is what Jesus said and did during His three years of teaching. It is the Way of Jesus. It lays out what Jesus expects of His followers. It is the Word of God.

Introduction.

Are people who claim that they are “saved” but do not follow the teachings and preachings of Jesus really “saved?” Can a person lose their salvation?

It has long been thought that those “born again” would be transformed to engage in serving others as Jesus commanded His followers to do. But there is little evidence among American Protestant churches that this is the case.

It’s been a mantra that “salvation is through faith (belief) and not by works (including serving others as Jesus commanded). And there is the conundrum.

“Woe to you, false preachers, and hypocrites” is how Jesus called out those who thought they were doing what God said but ignored what the Gospel of Jesus commands like love others, seek peace, establish justice, show mercy, have compassion for those in need, abused, or neglected.

Perhaps those who made a commitment to Jesus for their salvation but don’t follow the Gospel of Jesus with their lives have not “lost” their salvation; perhaps they never had it.

Changing how we understand “what the Gospel is” is hard, but it is essential, and it is what Jesus said. For many this comes as a rough wakeup call. But it’s not too late.

Why should we embrace the Gospel of Jesus?

Beyond the point that Jesus commanded it – I believe it can help heal the world. We live in a world where uncertainty and fear are normal, and we are frustrated by our inability to make it better.

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Jesus, who came to usher in the Kingdom of God on Earth, left the fulfillment of His mission up to His followers and His church when He said...

18 ¹⁸"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son ²⁰and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The Gospel of Matthew 28:18-20

It is up to us, His followers, to usher in the Kingdom of God on Earth, obeying everything He taught. It is the only way to heal the world.

This book offers practical ways forward toward a "whole" gospel – one that gives equal import to establishing the Kingdom of God on Earth and salvation.

In the name of the complete Gospel of Jesus, the Christ...



Charles S. Stuart

What makes you a "Christian?"

Here is my litmus test for someone calling themselves "Christian."

Any answer that doesn't include personal responsibility to live as Jesus taught is not Christian.

This may seem harsh and hard, but it is the Gospel of Jesus, an essential part of the complete Gospel of Jesus, the Christ.

CHARLES STUART

Finding Jesus

Embracing the Complete
Gospel of Jesus, the Christ.



**The Church Lost Jesus.
It's Not Too Late to Find Him.**

Finding Jesus

How the Church Lost Jesus.

The church has had a long history of elevating the Gospel of the Christ as the primary, even only, element of the Gospel of Jesus, the Christ.

How did this happen? There are several explanations.

For months, years even, I have looked for an answer to “when did Jesus become Christ?” in the church. At first, I thought this was just in American Evangelical Protestant churches, or after the Reformation.

Then I realized it seemed like “Jesus” was used in the Gospels and “Christ” was used in Paul’s letters. That’s when I conducted a thorough analysis of phrases that include one or both of these key words — Jesus and Christ — plus other titles used to refer to Jesus.

Paul introduced “Christ” as the title for the resurrected Jesus.

Paul was among the first generation of believers. After his conversion, a few years after the death and resurrection of Jesus, and early in his ministry, Saul began to use his Roman name Paulus, or Paul as we know it.

He spent a few years thinking about what his vision on the way to Damascus meant for himself and the world and spending time building trust with the Apostles. Paul then embarked on missionary trips which, in time, produced letters written in koine Greek (ca. 49-64CE).

These letters added to the oral tradition of stories passed along generation to generation about Jesus and slowly were viewed by many as the first written Christian scripture.

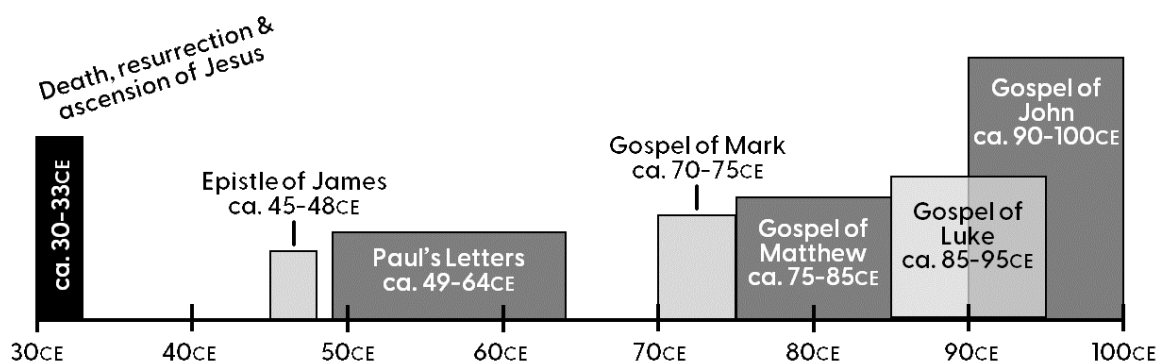
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It's my belief that Paul conflated into "Christ," a single word for meaning the resurrected Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, and the Son of Man. That explains why the usage of "Christ" increased so dramatically in Paul's letters, while the Gospels focused on the pre-crucified Jesus.

With this, Paul's understanding of who Jesus was became the first and prevailing understanding of who Jesus was by the many new believers around the world, particularly the Gentiles who had limited knowledge of Jesus since they were removed from where Jesus lived, died, and was resurrected.

So, "Jesus" became "Christ" before the Gospels were written, thanks to Paul and his letters. Here's how.

Timeline of Availability of Gospels & Paul's Letters



This chart shows the earliest church (ca. 30-100CE) resources that are included in the New Testament. The dates are estimates by biblical historians of when they were written. It is important to remember that they were not read broadly by church leaders for many years because there was no effective method to copy and distribute them. At best they may have been passed from one church to another.

Biblical scholars are confident that Paul's circular letters were the earliest New Testament writings, preceding the Gospels. As such, they were the earliest versions of written Christian scriptures most churches had available upon which to build their spiritual foundations.

Finding Jesus

Because of the arrangement of the books in the New Testament, with the four Gospels first and the Book of Revelation last, it appeared to me and many others that this was the order in which they were written.

In reality – and this is a significant point related to use of names and titles of Jesus in Paul’s letters – it was Paul’s letters that were the first written “scriptures” that eventually made it into the New Testament.

And, with the number of Gentile churches expanding, they quickly became the largest segment of Christians before the Gospel of Mark was written. It appears that very quickly the only Gospel they knew was the one Paul had taught and written.

Comparing how the Gospels and Paul’s letters referred to Jesus, the Christ.

In researching the use of the words “Jesus” and “Christ,” I looked at the words most used to refer to the living Jesus and the resurrected Christ as found in the Gospels and Paul’s letters. The following page shows the results drawn from the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (NRSVUE) bible.

<i>Titles</i>	<i>Gospels</i>	<i>Paul’s Letters</i>
Jesus*	620	99
Son of Man	82	0
Good News	35	11
Messiah	41	0
Son of God	15	9
Christ*	2	437
Gospel*	1	117
Jesus Christ	3	58

* *These words are used alone and not with other names.*

The Church Lost Jesus. It's Not Too Late to Find Him.

<i>Titles</i>	<i>Paul's Letters</i>
Christ Jesus	129
Lord Jesus Christ	96
Christ Jesus our Lord	15
Gospel of Christ	11
God in Christ Jesus.....	10
Gospel of God.....	10
Jesus Christ our Lord	9
Good News of Christ.....	6
God through Jesus Christ.....	2
Christ Jesus our Savior.....	1
Gospel of Jesus Christ.....	1
Jesus Christ our Savior.....	1

Paul uses "Christ" 776 times. The Gospels use it just 5 times.

Here we see that "Christ," in all its versions, was used just 5 times in the Gospels as compared with 776 times in Paul's letters. That is 155 times more in the letters than in the Gospels.

The Gospels use "Messiah, Son of God, Son of Man & Jesus" 775 times. Paul uses them 108 times.

In the Gospels, Messiah, Son of Man, Son of God, and Jesus (alone), taken together, were used 8 times more than in Paul's letters. These words or phrases were only used in Paul's letters 108 times as compared to 775 times in the Gospels.

In addition, the data shows that Paul's letters emphasized "Christ" over "Jesus" by a factor of 4.4 to 1 (Christ 437 times/Jesus 99 times).

The Gospels are mostly about the Life of Jesus.

A close examination of the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John reveals they are mostly about the life of Jesus with little to say about the salvation aspect of His death and resurrection.

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Over 90 percent of the events recorded in the Gospels are narrative of what Jesus said, did, or taught during His life. This is the Gospel of Jesus.

Less than 10 percent of the events are about Jesus's resurrection, appearances, and ascension. This is the beginning of the Gospel of the Christ.

It is clear the Gospels contain far more events and verses about Jesus before His death than after His resurrection.

It's not hard to see that the story of Jesus's life was destined by timing and uncontrollable events to be eclipsed by the power and imagery of the resurrected Christ.

The church "losing" Jesus...the elevation of the Gospel of the Christ over the Gospel of Jesus...did not begin recently. No one stood up and said, "What Jesus said and did is to be ignored."

What was said was, "Salvation is the only way to heaven and is the only meaning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

Early Church Fathers.

By the middle of the 2nd century five things had become evident. First, all those who were witnesses of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus were gone from the scene.

Second, while the first generation of witnesses and followers were convinced of Jesus's return to set all things right and carry them home, it now was becoming evident that preparations should be made for His return at an unknown date in the future.

Third, there was a rapid expansion of churches based on Paul's missionary journeys and the diaspora of Jewish Christians across the empire, including into the heart of the empire, Rome itself.

The Church Lost Jesus. It's Not Too Late to Find Him.

Fourth, there was a realization for the need to replace the oral tradition of the stories about Jesus's life and death with a written scripture collection built around Paul's letters and, perhaps, early versions of Mark's Gospel and others.

And fifth, leaders began to emerge, slowly at first, who were giving thought to what "the Way" movement should be and how it should be developed into a religion. One that could compete in the crowded litany of gods in the Gentile culture, which was where the early churches were most rapidly growing and spreading.

These thought leaders and influencers would become known as "Early Church Fathers" by the Roman Catholic Church in the fourth through ninth centuries.

These writers, thinkers, and martyrs communicated by written essays and letters sharing what they thought and heard with others eager to know the latest versions of the developing scripture.

As would happen in any wide-ranging group trying to develop a cohesive statement of history, purpose, and mission, they grappled with distinctive and important issues like the nature of Jesus, the relationship of Jesus the Christ with God and the Holy Spirit, and a rising tide of new and unusual ideas.

These ideas would become known by names like the "trinity" that competed for primacy. But because churches were independent of each other, and there was not a person or place to make decisions about disputes, this bubbling tension would continue until the culture crossed paths with the church in 313CE in, of all places, the Roman Empire.

In 313CE, Roman Emperors Constantine and Licinius granted liberty to all religions in the Empire, with special mention of Christianity, by issuing the Edict of Milan. This edict endeavored to quiet unrest and

Finding Jesus

persecutions across the Empire and reflects Constantine's recent conversion to Christianity.

But it did not quiet the theological debates within Christian communities. It took another 12 years of simmering upheaval before Constantine summoned church leaders to the Council of Nicaea (325CE). The outcome of this council gave the church a unity of theological thought for a brief time.

An English translation of the original Nicene Creed of 325CE is shown below and on the next page.

Nicene Creed (325CE)

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth,

Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down, and was incarnate and was made man;

He suffered, and rose again on the third day, and ascended into heaven;

From thence He shall come to judge the living and dead.

And in the Holy Spirit.

The Church Lost Jesus. It's Not Too Late to Find Him.

But as for those who say, There was when He was not, and, Before being born He was not, and that He came into existence out of nothing, or who assert that the Son of God is of a different hypostasis or substance, or created, or is subject to alteration or change — these the Catholic and apostolic Church anathematizes.

Now, re-read it looking for any mention of the life and teachings of Jesus... feed the hungry, care for the orphan and widowed, give justice to the marginalized.

It is startling to note the absence of Jesus's teachings in favor of the divinity of the resurrected Christ.

It would seem that very early in the development of the church the shift had already been made from "Jesus" to "Christ" by the church leaders.

In 381CE the Nicene Creed was confirmed and strengthened by the First Council of Constantinople summoned by Emperor Theodosius I.

With many other changes over the years, it continues today in the following form.

The Episcopal Church Nicene Creed (1979)

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father.

Through Him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit, He became incarnate from the Virgin Mary and was made man.

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For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate; He suffered death and was buried.

On the third day He rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

With the Father and the Son, He is worshiped and glorified.

He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

Amen.



Notice that the creed is still silent on the life and teachings of Jesus, making it difficult to claim this as part of the essence statement of Christianity because it ignores the Gospel of Jesus.

As with all institutions, the church and its belief systems evolved over time. Like early church leaders before them, Protestants in America in the 20th century also affected the religious and moral fabric of the culture.

Benefiting from the post-World War II economic boom where “bigger was better,” and the promise of the “American Dream,” the leaders of Protestant religious institutions continued to move towards a gospel that was salvation-only.

The Church Lost Jesus. It's Not Too Late to Find Him.

When this happened, the need to teach what Jesus said and did before His death, the Gospel of Jesus, largely diminished, and even disappeared in the fastest growing “born-again” Evangelical churches beginning in the 1950s.

The portion of churches self-identified as “Evangelical,” led by The Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant denomination in America, moved the preaching, teaching, bible studies, and theology toward the Gospel of the Christ as the entire Gospel.

What Jesus said and did was repurposed as prophetic of the Gospel of the Christ...and with that, Christianity in Protestant America became a simple, easy, and free-to-join path to eternal salvation, without any obligation to live according to the Gospel of Jesus.

It was believed that salvation would ignite a passion to live like Jesus. But without teaching, encouragement, and emphasis, this did not happen.

Evangelical churches were after growth in baptisms, and it worked. The “born-again” themes of the salvation-only Gospel drove double digit membership growth from 1945-2000.

But what was gained by “more souls saved” came at a cost of neglecting the teaching and preaching of the life and words of the Gospel of Jesus. Consequently, these churches reduced the living-on-Earth Jesus to nice, moral stories, instead of the living Word of the Son of God.

So, while these Evangelical churches grew, their congregants turned away from influencing the world as the Gospel of Jesus teaches.

Another explanation for why the church has lost Jesus is people don't read the Bible or think for themselves. Today anyone can read the Gospel of Jesus, in printed or digital form, and at no or little cost.

But it isn't read, really read. Instead, people relegated their understanding of what scripture means to the interpretation provided by their pastors and the church.

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This is ironic since the 16th century Reformation's primary thesis was for open and free access to scripture. In 1517, Martin Luther published his "Ninety-Five Theses."

He concluded that direct reading of the Bible allowed individual believers to make up their own minds without interpretation by the church.

Luther wasn't challenging the Bible or theological understandings of it. He was directly challenging the church's applications that produced interpretations far, in his opinion, from what the Bible, and Jesus, actually said.

! And yet, this still happens today. Pastors will say, "Let's read this passage of scripture for today's message." Then the pastor will say, "Now, here's what it means." And then the meaning will be presented most often through the Gospel of the Christ lens.

Understandably, Evangelical Protestant pastors today are recipients of the teachings they received from seminaries and are influenced by the pastors under whom they "came of age," who usually emphasized salvation more than Jesus's life and teachings.

Most of today's pastors first served congregations that already believed the church's highest purpose was to "save souls," not to "usher in the Kingdom of God on Earth."

The Church Lost Jesus. It's Not Too Late to Find Him.

Where do you stand?

Do you believe the church lost Jesus?

If not, how do you explain the lack of following what Jesus said, did, and taught?

If you do agree, what thoughts or ideas do you have to find Him?

Finding Jesus

The church “lost” Jesus by elevating the salvation-only Gospel and ignoring the Gospel of Jesus.

The shift was slow, subtle, and insidious.

No one stood up and said, “What Jesus said and did is to be ignored.”

Rather, what was said was, “Salvation is only possible through the Gospel of Christ.”

CHARLES STUART