

What's the Least I can Believe and Still be a Christian?
A Guide to What Matters Most
by Martin Thielen

Part I: Ten Things Christians *Don't* Need to Believe

Chapter Five – God Cares about Saving Souls but not Saving Trees

Scripture:

Amos 5:24 – *Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.*

Personal Faith (personal salvation, individual moral behavior) vs. Public Faith

Where have churches been involved in areas of? Where could they be more?

- Fighting injustice
- Fighting poverty
- Peacemaking
- Protecting the environment

Why the church should not participate in partisan politics:

1. it is illegal
2. it divides congregations
3. it diverts churches from their primary mission
4. it damages the credibility of the church
5. it reduces God to a political tool for one party

“Exclusively private faith degenerates into a narrow religion.” (Jim Wallis)

Bottom Line:

God cares about personal salvation and social justice, and so should God's church.

Notes:

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Chapter Six – Bad People will be “Left Behind” and then Fry in Hell

Scripture:

Matthew 24:36 – *About the day and hour no-one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*

Revelation 3:3 – *I will come like a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.*

Pre-millennial dispensationalism – the “rapture” of believers taken to heaven is followed by seven years of increasing tribulations, then followed by Christ’s second coming to win the battle of Armageddon.

Problems with “left-behind” theology:

1. Biblical – the “rapture” is not mentioned in scripture and Revelation does not provide a “road-map” to the end times
2. Historical – rapture thinking only began in the 19th century using textual notes from one bible translation (Scofield Reference)
3. Theological – pictures God as vengeful and violent, not loving us and seeking our redemption
4. Social – abandons hope in redeeming the world (justice, peace etc.)

What happens to non-believers at the Final Judgment? Three possibilities:

1. Eternal Punishment – separation from God with no chance at redemption
2. Possible Redemption – what is the purpose of punishment if not to teach?
3. Final Annihilation – After death there is no life, just the end

Bottom Line:

Left-behind rapture theology is neither a biblical nor a historical Christian belief and should be left behind by the mainline

Notes: