

“Passing the Test”

Scripture Reading: EXODUS 20:18-21

-) **SLIDES 1-6.** Bible Jeopardy!
-) **SLIDES 7-8.** Read today’s Scripture text.
-) **SLIDE 9.** I have titled today’s message “*Passing the Test.*”
-) **SLIDE 10.** This morning I am going to offer my answer (opinion) to the question: “*What is God up to with what’s happening in the world and specifically in America in 2020?*”
-) **SLIDE 11.** What do we know about God? Only what He has revealed to us. What is one thing that has been revealed? ISAIAH 46:8-10. Read. God has a purpose, and that purpose will be established, and that purpose will occur.
-) This year, 2020, and all the bizarre things that have occurred that we never thought would happen, did not take God by surprise. It is all part of His plan and His purpose, and He allows it for His pleasure. But what plan? What purpose? This is what I’m going to attempt to answer this morning.
-) First, how did I decide what Scripture text to preach on for this Sunday? How I decided I would never recommend any pastor ever doing this. It goes against all rules of preaching.
-) This year is 2020. There are 17 books in the Bible that have a chapter 20, verse 20. Could any of them relate in any possible way to everything we have experienced this year in 2020? That answer is “yes” and I’m going to tie EXODUS 20:20 in with the plan and purpose of our sovereign God for us today.
-) **SLIDE 12.** EXODUS 20:20. The Israelites were being tested. They were tested if they fear the Lord and they were tested on their desire not to sin. So, how am I going to relate this verse to the events of 2020, specifically in America?

-) I'm convinced that 2020 has been a test for the church. Does the church fear the Lord? Does the church have a desire not to sin? How has this crazy year of 2020 made an impact on these two spiritual issues within the church? Has the church passed the test? My answer is no. The church has failed and failed miserably. Allow me to qualify my response.
-) **SLIDE 13**. When I use the word "*church*" I'm talking about those men and women who either attend a church and/or claim to be Christians. Explain chart.
-) At the beginning of this COVID pandemic back in March, I was asked what I thought God was up to with the COVID virus. I responded by saying, "*God is pruning His church.*" You see, I'm convinced there's a lot of dead branches thinking they are clinging to the vine, when they are not.
-) **SLIDE 14**. JOHN 15:1-2. Explain.
-) Since this pandemic began back in March, many churches are conducting in-house services with restrictions—masks and social distancing. Like us. Many people are fearful to attend and stay home. I understand this concern.
-) However, most if not all of these same churches offer online services of some sort—either live streaming of their service or, like we do here, offer a YouTube video of our service later on that day.
-) With that in mind, what has been the attitude of American church people since this pandemic has begun? What has happened to the stay-at-home church video viewing audience? That viewing audience of those available services has dwindled since this pandemic began in March. Let's look at what has happened just here at BGCC.
-) **SLIDE 15-16**. Explain chart. This does not surprise me. Why not? Because this is how church people behave. Not just BGCC. Every church.

-) OK. Here's what's happened. Because of a pandemic, the routine of in-person church has now been limited. But the church offers a reliable secondary option. A live-feed video or a YouTube video. But some form of a church service was still offered to the people who were not able to attend.
-) OK. It's not the real thing, but under the present pandemic circumstances it makes for a viable substitute solution. But what happens and what has happened? Those who are on the fringe will fall away. Will any of these people come back. Here at BGCC I believe most will come back. But for most other churches, I say many will not come back. Why not?
-) From man's point of view, it's because these people were never connected in the first place and have found better things to do with their Sunday morning time. But they will say they are in the 65% of American Christians.
-) And from God's point of view, it's because the church is being pruned by God and the dead branches are being cut off and will be cast into the fire.
-) Folks, this pandemic will end. But I assure you, the pruning is not going to stop with the end of COVID-19. I'm convinced God is judging the church and He is judging America. He is turning this country over to its own depravity.
-) And severe religious persecution is just around the corner from liberal leaders who are convinced that Christianity is a threat to their agenda of power and control. And what better way for God to prune His church than to allow these evil and wicked forces to execute persecution on a fallen, weak, and impotent church.
-) And don't think God will not use evil for His purpose. He used Assyria to exile Israel and He used Babylon to exile Judah.
-) Again, I'm convinced that the problem in America today began with the church failing to be the church.

-) **SLIDE 17.** I spend many hours a week watching discernment ministries on YouTube. My favorite people to watch are Chris Rosebrough, Justin Peters, and Steven Kozar.
-) Take some time and watch the heresy and all the ungodly actions that are going on in the “*church*” today. The idolatry of worshiping prosperity and material possessions. Graven images in the form of popularity preachers. Prophecies (visions) spoken in the name of God that never come to pass.
-) Never preaching on the Biblical roles of men and women in the church and in the home (desire to be PC). Supporting and condoning the killing of innocent unborn babies for the sake of choice and twisting the Word of God to defend that position. Stealing money from desperate people who want a miracle the TV preacher tells them they will get.
-) The unfaithful interpretation of Scripture (telling lies) to twist and distort the Word of God to fit their brand of theology (which really is no theology at all). And promising people they can have all that their carnal minds covet if they will just send their seed money into their ministry so they can purchase their jets, their big homes, and their fancy cars.
-) And can we seriously think for one minute that God is pleased with these people and their actions claiming to represent Him?
-) Folks, what I just described to you is not church. This is paganism disguising itself as a church. And all the itching ears flock to these places because they no longer desire sound doctrine. Well, news flash. Sound doctrine is truth and truth will 1) hold a person accountable and 2) it will divide. And truth is exactly what these people do NOT want to hear.
-) *“Don’t hold me accountable. I love my sin.” Or “Doctrine divides. Let’s not divide us. Let’s all just be unified in Jesus.”*
-) Do you think for one minute that I want to team up with the Episcopal Church down the road led by a lesbian pastor?

) Do you think I want BGCC to partner and be one with the UCC or the PCUSA or other “churches” that support same-sex marriage and homosexual relationships? Not me. And not us. And this position we must/will take is no longer a popular position. But I promise you, it is the Biblical position.

) But Mike, didn't you just tell us last week that love never fails? Folks, there is nothing more loving than the truth. And please, do not confuse love with the acceptance and the condoning of anything and everything.

) **SLIDE 18.** Read.

) So, let me just say this right now to everyone in here and anyone listening to this message. If you don't like sound doctrine, go somewhere else. Because I am not here to tickle your ears, to be non-offensive, to be politically correct, or to please your fancies.

) I am here to preach the Word of God and to please Him who put me here. If you desire to grow in the knowledge and wisdom of God's Word, you are at the right place. Listen, I don't persuade people to come to BGCC, nor do I beg people on bended knee to stay at BGCC.

) Folks, the church today is being tested today in 2020, just like God tested the Israelites in EXODUS 20:20.

) So, let's ask those three questions again. 1) Does the church fear the Lord? Other churches may not but we will recognize the absolute holiness of God and have the proper reverence for Him.

) **SLIDE 19.** 2) Does the church have a desire not to sin? Other churches may not but we call out sin for what it is. We won't fall into the deception of ISAIAH 5:20. And this shepherd will continue to protect this flock from evil, regardless of its source.

) And 3) is the church passing the test? Other churches are failing miserably, but here at BGCC we will pass the test.

-) We will continue down a path of righteousness seeking to become holy, set apart, and different than the rest of the world. Because that is what the church, the true body of believers, those called by God, does.
-) Afraid of COVID-19 and the condition of America? Don't be. God will take care of those who are truly His own. If He takes care of the sparrows, He'll take care of His own.
-) **SLIDE 20**. So, I ask one simple question. Where do you stand with truth? The truth isn't always easy, but it does matter, and it will set you free!
-) Next week we will begin the new year of 2021 by going back to our study of the Book of GALATIANS.

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