

SEVEN CHARGES AGAINST THE RELIGIONISTS

JOHN 5:39-47 • TV140A

A television broadcast sermon delivered
SUNDAY, MARCH 22ND, 1981

By
HENRY T. MAHAN

Transcribed, edited and published
AUGUST 27TH, 2014

HENRY T. MAHAN TAPE LIBRARY
Zebulon Baptist Church
6088 Zebulon Highway
Pikeville, KY 41501

John 5:39-47

“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. I receive not honour from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?”

We are turning for our message today to the book of **John, the 5th chapter**. I will be dealing with **verses 39 through 47**.

Now, I would like very much for you to take your Bible and open it to the **5th chapter of the book of John** and follow along with me as I bring you a message on this subject: **SEVEN CHARGES WHICH CHRIST BROUGHT AGAINST THE RELIGIONIST’S OF HIS DAY**.

Someone said years ago “time changes everything.” Well, it’s true that time does change many things but time doesn’t change everything. The song writer pictured it this way, he said:

SEVEN CHARGES AGAINST THE RELIGIONISTS

JOHN 5:39-47 • HENRY T. MAHAN

**“Swift to its close
Ebbs out life’s little day
Earth’s joys grow dim
Its glories pass away.**

**Change and decay
In all around I see
O thou who changest not
Abide with me.”**

God doesn’t change. There are several things that time cannot change:

First of all: Time has not changed the fact of sin! It is still true that *“all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”* It is still true that *“all we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way.”*

It is still true that the Lord God looks down from heaven upon the children of men and he says, *“There is none good, no not one. There is none that seeketh after God. They are altogether become unprofitable.”* So, time hasn’t changed the fact of sin!

Secondly: Time hasn’t changed the holiness of God or the requirements of his holy law! The writer of Scriptures says: *“that God dwelleth in a light for which no man can approach.”* God dwells in holiness and righteousness.

Even the prophets of old cried: *“woe is me; I am a man of unclean lips”* Peter said, *“Lord depart from me I am a sinful man.”* Job said: *“I put my hand over my mouth for mine eyes have seen the Lord.”*

Thirdly: Time has not changed the way that God saves sinners! It is still true that the *“wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* It is still true *“without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.”* It is still true that Christ is *“the way, the truth, and the life and no man cometh unto the Father but by him.”*

Time hasn’t changed these things. Time hasn’t changed the fact of sin, the holiness of God and the requirements of his holy law or the way that God redeems sinners

Fourthly: Unfortunately, time has not changed man’s efforts to merit salvation by his own works!

Time has not changed man’s efforts to merit heaven by his own good deeds. Paul wrote of the people in his day; he said: *“I bear them record; they have a zeal for God (they are enthusiastic about God and religion and their tradition and ceremonies), but not according to knowledge: they are ignorant of God’s righteousness and they are going about to establish their own righteousness before God.”* They are going about making much ado to establish a righteousness of their own before God.

SEVEN CHARGES AGAINST THE RELIGIONISTS

JOHN 5:39-47 • HENRY T. MAHAN

In the 5th **Chapter of John**, this passage that I told you to turn to a moment ago, our Lord Jesus Christ confronts the religionists with four undeniable witnesses of His deity, His glory, and His mission into this world and yet they refused all of these witnesses.

They would not hear Him; they despised and rejected Him. The Lord said unto them in **verse 33** about John the Baptist, *“you sent unto John and he bare witness unto the truth.”*

John was the last of the Old Testament prophets. John was the forerunner of Christ. John was the miraculous infant sent to Zacharias and Elizabeth. John came crying *“behold the Lamb of God.”* They rejoiced for a season in his message but they finally rejected what he had to say.

Then Christ said in **verse 36**: *“The works that I do, they bear witness of me.”* Even Nicodemus said: *“No man could do these miracles except God be with him.”*

And another person said: *“Can a man open the eyes of a blind man except he be from God?”* Christ said: *“The works that I do, they bear witness of me.”* The Father Himself has declared that, *“This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”*

In **verse 37** Christ said: *“You have never nor heard his voice at any time nor seen his shape.”*

He said: in **verse 39**, *“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”*

So, in spite of all of these undeniable witnesses, the forerunner, the works, the voice of the Father from heaven and the inspired Word of God itself, they despised Him, they rejected Him, they refused His Gospel of grace.

So, our Lord brings seven charges against these men. I want you to compare them with our own day. This is not just talking about some folks that lived 2,000 years ago; this is talking about 1981.

Time hasn't changed the fact of sin and it hasn't changed the holiness of God or the holiness of His law or the requirements of his law. Time hasn't changed the way God saves sinners and time hasn't changed man's efforts to build a tower to the sky with his own works or merit salvation by his own deeds.

These are the people to whom our Lord is speaking. He brings seven charges against them.

First of all: In **verse 39**, the charge is; Christ said: *“You search the scriptures,”* that is, you study the Bible, you read the Bible, for *“in the scriptures you think that you have life but they are they which testify of me”*

Now, my friends; let us all have a high regard and esteem for the written Word of God for it verily is the Word of God. *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”*

SEVEN CHARGES AGAINST THE RELIGIONISTS

JOHN 5:39-47 • HENRY T. MAHAN

“A man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God. It is the word of God and it abideth forever.” Our Lord said: *“Heaven and earth shall pass away but not one jot or tittle shall pass from my word until it is all fulfilled.”*

His Word is necessary to salvation for *“faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God and he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life.”*

Salvation is not in the Bible, it is in Christ, about whom the Bible is written, about whom the Bible speaks, whom the Scriptures present.

This is what our Lord is saying to these religionists. They were students of the Scripture. They were students of religion, they were students of theology, and they were students of doctrine.

They knew the prophecies and they knew the traditions of their fathers and they knew the laws and they knew the peace days and the holy days and Sabbath days.

They were orthodox and fundamental and Christ said: *“you search the scriptures, (you study the Scriptures, and you quarrel with the Scriptures) for in the scriptures you think you have life but the scriptures testify of me.”*

Redemption and salvation is not in a doctrine or in a system of theology or in a religious tradition. Salvation is in a person. The Scripture does not say: he that believeth the Bible shall be saved, but, *“he that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life.”* There is a difference!

It doesn't say he that believeth the doctrine shall be saved, it says, *“he that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life.”* It's not he that hath a copy of the Bible or he that hath the right creed or catechism, but *“he that hath the Son hath everlasting life.”*

Men make a Saviour out of the means, did you know that? God has used certain means to bring His revelation to meaning. He used Mary to bring a Son into this world and men, instead of worshipping the Son, worship Mary.

Our Lord Jesus Christ gave baptism as a picture of redemption, His death, burial, and resurrection as identification with Him in our profession of faith. Men make a Saviour out of baptism and ignore the Son.

The Lord Jesus gave us the bread and the wine as symbols of His broken body and shed blood and men try to find salvation in the elements instead of in the person of whom the elements represent.

How blind we are but we are determined to have a part in the redemption of our soul. We are determined to find some kind of basis on which we can be accepted through our own deeds.

Our Lord said: *“You search the Scriptures. In them you think you have life; they are they which testify of me.”*

SEVEN CHARGES AGAINST THE RELIGIONISTS

JOHN 5:39-47 • HENRY T. MAHAN

Secondly: The charge against the religionist is in **verse 40**, He said: *“you will not come to me that you might have life.”*

Now, we are not talking here about physically coming to Christ. Many came to Him in that way; it is not a physical coming. Salvation is not a physical walking down a church aisle or walking down anywhere or presenting me physically anywhere. That’s not salvation.

Many people came to Christ in this way; while He was here on this earth. Nicodemus came to Him one night to talk theology. He came to discuss theology but He didn’t come to Christ in a saving manner.

The rich young ruler came to Christ. He came to discuss his righteousness. He came physically and he came in the flesh.

Some people came to be healed. Some people came to be fed. Christ said: *“I know why you are following me. You are following me because I fed you the loaves and fishes.”*

Some came to trap him in his talk but some came as sinners to find mercy, to find forgiveness and some came in heart and faith and they found mercy and they found grace.

The leper came crying: *“Lord; if you will, you can make me clean (whole).”* The Canaanite woman came crying: *“Lord, have mercy on me”* and she received mercy.

“The Publican in the temple would not so much lift his eyes to heaven but smote upon his breast and cried to God: Lord, be merciful to me the sinner.” He came in heart. He came in spirit to Christ. He came in truth and he found mercy.

The thief cried: *“Lord; remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”* But see, this is a work of grace. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ said in **John 6:44**: *“no man can come to me except my Father which sent me draw him.”*

“He that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me (comes to Christ).” It is a revelation of grace. It is a work of the Holy Spirit.

But this is the charge He brought against the religionist, He said: *“you will not come to me that you might have life.”* This coming is not a physical coming it is a spiritual coming to Christ.

Thirdly: This is a charge that He brought against them, **verse 42**, he said: *“I know you, that you have not the love of God in you.”*

You see, *“God doesn’t see as man seeth. Man looks on the outward countenance and God looks on the heart.”* God said: *“I know you.”*

Our Lord looked at these religionists and they were all dressed in their religious garb with their garb phylacteries, you know, and the rolls of Scriptures under their arms and their funny looking hats on

SEVEN CHARGES AGAINST THE RELIGIONISTS

JOHN 5:39-47 • HENRY T. MAHAN

their heads and their long beards trying to look pious and sweet, holy, righteous, and loving the upper-most seats in the synagogue.

He just pointed his finger at them and He says: *“I know you; I know you.”* These people don’t know you. You fooled them. People are fooled by your professions. People are fooled by your claims and by your words. People are fooled by you but He said, *“I know you. This is what I know about you; you have not the love of God in you. You don’t love God, you love yourselves.”*

You see, if men love God, they love His Word. That’s right! Men who love God say: *“speak Lord, thy servant heareth.”* Men who love God love His holiness, they love His law. David said: *“I love thy law.”* Men who love God love His judgments. That’s right; they love His judgments. They cry: *“True and righteous are his judgments.”* They don’t question God’s judgments.

Men who love God love His people. Men who love God love His Son. You can’t love the Father and not love the Son.

Christ said: *“I know you. You have not the love of God in you.”* “No matter what you profess outwardly, no matter how many people you fool with your professions and claims; I know you.”

He’s the one with whom I must deal. He’s the one whom I must face. He’s the one before whom I must appear. He’s the one in whose eyes all things are naked and open. He said; *“I know you and you have not the love of God in you.”*

Fourthly: The charge that he brought against them in **verse 43**; I want you listen to this; our Lord said: *“I am come in my Father’s name and you receive me not. Let another come in his own name and him you will receive.”*

Now, you listen to this: what a terrible charge to bring against, supposedly, intelligent men. *“I come in my Father’s name* (with the right witnesses, the right credentials, and the fulfillment of the Scriptures) *and you won’t receive me:*

“Let another come (without credentials, without any prophecy or promise, in his own name, seeking his own glory and his own gain) *and him ye will receive.”*

Now, this is true, we see it in the Bible; *“he came to his own and his own received him not.”* The Scripture says: *“He was in the world and the world was made by him and the world knew him not.”*

It says in **Isaiah 53**: *“He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. There was no comeliness about him, no beauty that we should desire him.”* He looked at His disciples and said: *“my brethren; marvel not if the world hates you, it hated me before it ever hated you.”*

Men seem to have no trouble believing error, no matter how ridiculous the error is, they have no trouble believing it but they rebel against the truth. That’s what our Lord is saying in **John 3:19**:

SEVEN CHARGES AGAINST THE RELIGIONISTS

JOHN 5:39-47 • HENRY T. MAHAN

“This is condemnation; light is come into this world but men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.”

The most absurd and ridiculous thing will be accepted in the name of religion. The most absurd and ridiculous promise and promotion, program, and a preacher can be the most dishonest as to wind up in jail and people will still follow him no matter how ridiculous he is, while grace, mercy, and truth, are rejected.

The reason for this is because error is natural to men of darkness. They love darkness and they are children of darkness. They love error. Truth must be revealed. Error comes naturally with us by nature, you see; we are sons of Adam. He said to those men: *“you are of your father the devil; he was a liar from the beginning and you are his sons.”*

But, truth must be revealed. Listen to this Scripture: *“Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered the heart of man, the things that God has prepared for them that love him. But, he hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit for the spirit searcheth the deep things of God.”*

“What man knoweth the things of a man; save the spirit of man that is in him? Even so, the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit, for the natural man receiveth not the things of God, they are foolishness to him, but the spiritual man receiveth them because they are spiritually revealed.”

You see, the natural mind is enmity against God. Christ said, *“I come, in my Father’s name and you receive me not. Let another come in his own name and him you will receive”* in the most absurd and ridiculous fashion, dressed in the silliest looking religious uniforms, and men receive them.

Fifthly: The charge that our Lord brought against those religionists is in **verse 44**, and then he says: Now watch this: *“How can you believe who receive honor one of another and you seek not the honor which comes from God only?”*

Men love titles; I’m talking about in religion, in religion. They love titles. They love to be called Rabbi, Professor, Doctor, Bishop, and Reverend. They love recognition. They love praise and they love the *“uppermost seats in the synagogue.”*

They love to serve on committees. They like to have authority. They love that recognition. They pray to be seen of men. They fast to be seen of men. They give to receive honor of men. They seek rewards.

It’s no fun to pray if you don’t tell people about it. It’s no pleasure to fast if nobody knows about it but you. It’s no fun to give unless somebody at least knows you are doing it so they can pat you on the back. We seek honor one of another. This is one worm bragging on another worm. That’s all in the world it is. He said: *“You pray to be seen of men; you have your reward.”* When they see you and brag on you that is your reward. We don’t seek the honor that comes from God.

SEVEN CHARGES AGAINST THE RELIGIONISTS

JOHN 5:39-47 • HENRY T. MAHAN

When you fast to be seen of men and they see you and brag on you, that is your reward. When you give alms to be seen of men, to be bragged on and they see you and brag on you, that's it. You have wound it up; you've got what you were looking for.

He said: *"When you pray you enter your closet and shut the door. When you fast, (wash your face, comb your hair, and don't you tell a soul about it; don't you tell a soul)."*

We seek honor that comes from men. What is the honor that comes from God? It's being made glorious within, gracious within, not without. It's having a new name, not a new house. It's being an heir of God, not an heir of men.

Our Lord said: *"Don't rejoice that the demons are subject unto you. (That's nothing to kick up your heels about.) I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightening. You rejoice that your name is written in the book of life."*

I tell you; *"We count the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt"* when we know His name, when we love His truth, when we seek the honor that comes from God only.

You better bury earthly honor; you better be done with it. *"He that shall save his life shall lose it but he that shall lose his life for my sake shall find it."*

Sixthly: The charge that the Lord brought against those men in **verse 45**; He said: *"you trust in Moses."*

Now, it wasn't Moses himself, in whom they trusted, he was dead. What Christ is saying is, "you trust the law of Moses to save you. You trust the fact that you are keeping the law; they rested in the law. They made their boast of the law."

In fact, the rich, young ruler came to Him and said: *"what good thing must I do to inherit life?"* Christ said, to expose His arrogance, pride, and self-righteousness, He said: *"keep the law."*

He said: *"Why, I've kept all these from my youth up, what lack I yet?"* Paul said: *"Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, (the holy law of God); do you not hear the law?"* Don't you hear what the law said? Don't you hear what the law requires?

The law requires perfection in birth, in deed, in spirit, in attitude, in imagination, in word, perfection. The law cannot save; it never was given to save. It can only serve to condemn.

"What the law saith it saith to them who are under the law and that's every man, that every mouth may be stopped and all the world become guilty, guilty before God." You trust the law. Christ said: *"You are trusting Moses and Moses can't save."*

Seventh: Here is the final charge he brought against them in **verse 47**, he said: *"if you believe not the writings of Moses"*

SEVEN CHARGES AGAINST THE RELIGIONISTS

JOHN 5:39-47 • HENRY T. MAHAN

Now, what are we talking about when we talk about the writings of Moses? My friends; we are talking about the Old Testament Scriptures. We are talking about Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and all the rest of them. Those are the writings of Moses, the first five books of the Bible.

They said: *“We have Moses.”* He said: *“If you had believed Moses you would have believed me for Moses wrote of me.”*

Did you know that nearly every time the word Scriptures is used in the New Testament it is referring to the Old Testament Scriptures, nearly every time? He said, *“I thirst, that the scriptures might be fulfilled.”*

“Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, was buried and rose again, according to the scriptures.” You see; the Old Testament Scriptures is Christ in promise, Christ in prophecy, Christ in picture, Christ in type, and Christ in symbol.

Paul said: *“I preach unto you the gospel by which you are saved, wherein you stand, in which you believe, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, according to the Word of God.”*

Our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to some of His disciples on the road to Emmaus after He arose from the grave. He sat down, the Scripture says in **Luke 24:44 through 48**: *“and taught them the scriptures, opening their understanding that they might understand the scriptures, (the Old Testament).”*

He said: *“Everything written in the writings of Moses, in the prophets, in the law, in the Psalms, in the Scriptures, is fulfilled concerning me. To him give all the prophets witness (that He is the Redeemer and in His name is the remission of sin).”*

Now, here is what our Lord is saying in the charge; He said: *“if you believe not the writings of Moses, how shall you believe my words?”*

You see, Scripture is interpreted in the light of Scripture. Whatever is written in the New Testament is already written in the Old Testament. The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed and the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.

For example: When Israel was down in the land of Egypt and God was going to come through at midnight and destroy the first born in every home, He had Moses and the people of Israel put blood on the doorpost and on the lintel, both sides of the door on the lintel.

He said: *“When I see the blood I will pass over you.”* They kept that Passover every year commemorating their deliverance from Egypt.

Our Lord met with His disciples in the book of **Luke, chapter 22** it is written and assembled them around a table to eat the Passover, commemorating the deliverance from Egypt. He said as He broke the bread: *“this is my body broken for you; this is my blood shed for you.”*

SEVEN CHARGES AGAINST THE RELIGIONISTS

JOHN 5:39-47 • HENRY T. MAHAN

The Passover of the Old Testament now is ended and is fulfilled, why? It's because Christ is our Passover. We no longer slay a lamb; we no longer shed the blood of a lamb. We no longer eat what we call the "*Passover Feast*;" we now look to Christ who is our Passover. Christ is our Passover. His blood was shed for us!

The same things true of the rock in the Old Testament; that rock is Christ. The brazen serpent lifted up; that serpent pictures Christ prophesied of Christ. So, our Lord says: "*If you don't believe Moses you are not going to believe me!*"