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# Six Woes
# Luke 11: 37-54

**Six woes DIG: Where does Jesus go to dinner? What surprises the Pharisee? How does the Lord turn the tables on His host? What is the basic point in verses 39-41? In your own words, what is the meaning of the first three woes in verses 42-44? Given their view of tombs and the dead, what is the significance of the unmarked graves to the Pharisees in verse 44? What is the point of these criticisms? In your own words, what is the meaning of the last three woes in verses 46-52? In the sixth woe what does Yeshua mean by the key of knowledge? What is the main point of these accusations directed at the experts in the Torah? How does this dinner with a Pharisee compare with a previous one? What was the difference between the two?**

**REFLECT: Typically, Messiah is thought of as "meek and mild." What is the significance of this passage's presentation of Yeshua for you? Of the first three woes directed at the Pharisees, which one could the Lord be directing at you? Why? Of the last three woes directed at the experts in the Torah, which one might you be guilty of? Why? Is there any way you would like your life to change in light of what you have read here? Why or why not? What specifically would you like to see happen this week? Do you have someone who can tell you something very difficult that you need to hear?**

**When Christ had finished speaking, a Pharisee invited Him to eat with him.** Once again (**to see link click Ef – Jesus Anointed by a Woman Who Led a Sinful Life**) we see **a Pharisee** inviting **Yeshua** to **eat with him** for the purpose of entrapping **Him**. **So Messiah went in and reclined at the table. But the Pharisee was amazed when he noticed that Jesus did not** follow **the Oral Law** (see **Ei – The Oral Law**) and **first wash before the meal (Luke 11:37-38).**



**Then Yeshua** condemned **the Pharisees** for **their** hypocrisy. **They** were overly concerned with external appearances. While keeping a kosher kitchen, **they** were quite careful. **You clean the outside of the cup and dish.** The word kosher itself implies cleanliness, both ritually and literally. **This was so important that there is an entire tractate dedicated to utensils and dietary laws (Tractate Kelim). They** kept a kosher kitchen, **but**, unkosher actions had crept **inside their** lives. **But inside they were full of greed and wickedness.** The obvious violations of the spirit of the Torah lead **Christ** to call **the Pharisees foolish! They** should have been just as concerned with **cleansing the inside** as well as the **outside**. **Did not the One who made the outside make the inside also? But now as for what is inside you – be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you (Luke 11:39-41).** One indication that **they** were **clean** on **the inside** would be **their** willingness to give materially **to the poor**. This didn't mean that **their** giving would atone for **their** sins, but, that **it** would demonstrate a proper relationship with the Torah and to **ADONAI**.

**Jesus** then addressed **Himself** particularly to **the Pharisees** of the group by castigating them at **first** with **three** general **woes**. This initial grouping was concerned with the lesser demands of **the Torah** and not the greater demands that we see in the **last** grouping of **three woes**. For example, nothing was supposed to be eaten unless it was first tithed.

**1. Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of even the smallest income from your herb gardens,** thinking that by such an observance they were fulfilling the Torah. **But Christ** said: **You** deliberately **neglect justice** because **you are** indifferent to the poor **and** pass **them** by. **Messiah** revealed that the Torah demanded love for **ADONAI** and justice toward the poor. When **the Pharisees** concentrated on the Oral Law **they** did not recognize **the LORD's** right to **them** and all **they** possessed (see the practice of declaring **their** possessions **Corban** in **Fs – Why Do Your Disciples Break the Tradition of the Elders**). Consequently, **you** also **neglect the love for God.** This made **them hypocrites**

**(Luke 12:1)**. **You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone (Luke 11:42)**. **Yeshua** did not condemn the tithe, but approved of it; however, the sin of **the Pharisees** was in neglecting the weightier matters of the inward state of the heart.[1024]

**2. Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the most important** semi-circular **seats** facing the congregation **in the synagogues.** Even at meals they observed how they were seated in the order of "worthiness" at the table **(Mattityahu 23:6)**. **And** filled with pride, **they** wanted to be honored by men and even liked to be saluted **in the market places** as a sign of a **respectful greeting (Luke 11:43).** This was in sharp contrast to the character of Moshe, whom they professed to respect, and who was characterized by **ADONAI** as being **more humble than anyone on earth (Numbers 12:3).**[1025]

**3. Woe to you, because you are like unmarked tombs, which people walk over without knowing it (Luke 11:44). They** defile without any warning because they are not white washed. Any Jew who came into contact with **a dead body** or **tomb (Numbers 9:6-10, 19:16)** would be defiled and would have to undergo an extensive threefold cleansing ritual. There would be a period of *waiting* where the defilement had stopped **(Numbers 19:11-14)**; then a period of *cleansing* **(Leviticus 15:1-33)**; and finally a *sacrifice* would be made (see my commentary on **Exodus Fe – The Burnt Offering**). Isra'el had three major pilgrim festivals (Shalosh Regalim) – Passover (Pesach), Weeks (Shavu'ot), and Booths (Sukkot). During the second Temple period all the raised **tombs** around the Holy City of Jerusalem would be carefully whitewashed on the outside to make sure no pilgrims would accidentally defile themselves by coming into contact with **them** and, as a result of the period of the seven day *waiting* period, be unable to join in the festival, including the offering of sacrifices. So here, **Yeshua** accused **the Pharisees** of defiling people spiritually because of **their** hypocrisy and false teaching of **the Oral Law**. **The Pharisees** feared defilement from ritual uncleanness, but **Messiah** pointed out that **their** greed, pride and wickedness defiled the entire nation.

It was at this point that **Jesus** was interrupted. **One of the experts in the Torah** broke in. Remembering in what contempt some of the learned held the ignorant bigotry of **the Pharisees**, we can understand that **he** might have listened with secret enjoyment to **their** rebuke . But, as **he** rightly remarked: **Rabbi, when you say these things, you insult us also (Luke 11:45 CJB).** By not merely attacking **their** practice, but also **their** principles, the whole system of **the tradition of the**

**elders (Mattityahu 15:2)**, which **they** represented, was condemned. And so **the Lord** assuredly meant it to be offensive.[1026]

**Tradition** has not only led Judaism down the wrong path into false doctrine, it has done the same thing with Catholicism. By the time Christ was born, **the tradition of the elders**, or **the Oral Law**, had been declared of equal authority with **the Torah** by the Great Sanhedrin; and in the Catholic Church, the Counsel of Trent declared **tradition** of equal authority with the Bible in 1545.

Protestantism and Roman Catholicism agree that the Bible is the inspired Word of **God**. However, they differ widely in regard to the place that it is to have in the life of the Church. Protestantism holds that the Bible *alone* is the authoritative and sufficient rule of faith and practice. But Romanism holds that the Bible must be *supplemented* by a great body of **tradition** consisting of 14 or 15 apocryphal books or portions of books equivalent to about two-thirds the volume of the New Testament, the voluminous writings of the Greek and Latin church fathers, and a huge collection of church council pronouncements and papal decrees as of equal value and authority – a veritable library in itself.

It is very evident that this difference of opinion concerning the authoritative basis of the Church is bound to have radical and far-reaching effects. The age long controversy between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism comes to a head regarding the question of authority. This is the basic difference between the two. And it is in its use of **tradition** that both Judaism and Catholicism find the authority for its destructive doctrines.

We should not reject all custom, but rather, make careful use of it in so far as it relates to Scripture. We should, for example, treat with respect and study with care the confessions and council pronouncements of the various churches, particularly those of the ancient Church and of Reformation days. We should also give careful attention to the confessions and council decision of present day churches, scrutinizing most carefully, of course, those of the denomination to which we belong.

But, no church should have the right to formulate new doctrine or to make decisions contrary to the teaching of the sixty-six books of the Bible. The history of the universal Church shows all too clearly that church leaders and church councils can and do make mistakes, some of them monumental. Consequently, their decisions should have no authority except as they are based on Scripture.

In professing to interpret the Bible in light of **tradition**, the Roman Church in reality places tradition above the Bible (as Judaism and Mormonism does), so that the Roman Church is governed, not by the Bible, but by the church itself that sets up the traditions and says what they mean. Theoretically, the Roman Church accepts the Bible, but in practice she does not leave her members free to follow it.

Therefore, in the final analysis, Roman Catholic tradition nullifies the Word of **God**. She maintains that alongside the written Word of God there is also an unwritten word, an oral tradition if you will, that was handed down generation after generation by word of mouth (is this not eerily similar to **the** Jewish **Oral Law**?). It takes precedence over the written Word and interprets it. The pope, as **God's** personal representative on the earth, can legislate for things outside of the Bible as new situations arise.

The Council of Trent, the most authoritative of all Roman councils, and the one of greatest historical significance, in the year 1546, declared that the Word of God is contained both in the Bible and in **tradition**. Thus, it declared that the two are of equal authority, and it is the duty of every Roman Catholic to give them equal worship and respect. Don't get me wrong. I believe there are believers who are truly saved within the Catholic Church; however, they are saved in spite of her **tradition**, and not because of it.[1027]

**4. Woe to you,** supposed **experts in the Torah, because you load people down with burdens** of **the Oral Law** (see **Ei – The Oral Law**) that **they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them (Luke 11:46).** This is **the yoke** of pharisaic Judaism of which **Christ** had spoken when **He** invited those who were **weary and burdened to come** to **Him (Matthew 11:28)**. The 365 prohibitions and the 248 commandments that **the Pharisees** came up with was impossible enough, but then they added about 1,500 other **Oral Laws** for each and every one of the 613 prohibitions and commandments of the Torah. **The Pharisees** provided no assistance to bear that burden. It was an impossible, hopeless, crushing weight.

**5. Woe to you, because you build tombs for the prophets, and it was your ancestors who killed them. So you testify that you approve of what your ancestors did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs. Because of this, God in his wisdom said, "I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute" (Luke 11:47-49).** Their rejection of **the prophets** lead to the rejection of **the**

**Messiah**. Everything the prophets had to say about **Jesus** had been said by that time. That particular **generation** would be required to pay for **their** rejection with **their** own blood in 70 AD with the destruction of the Temple by the Roman general Titus and his army. The rejection of **Yeshua** and the rejection of **the prophets** cannot be separated. **That generation** could not claim to affirm **the prophets** without affirming **Jesus Christ**.

**Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah** the high priest**, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary (Second Chronicles 24:20-22). Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all (Luke 11:50-51).** This **generation** had identified **themselves** with murderers and were under divine judgment. If any of **them** had argued that **they** were not identifying **themselves** with **their fathers** but were honoring those whom **their fathers** had wrongly put to death, **they** would have been asked why **they** did not observe all that **the prophets** commanded **them** to do. **The prophets** had also promised the coming of **Messiah**. By **their** rejecting **Christ's** words, **this generation** had identified **themselves** with **their forefathers** who had murdered **the prophets**. **They** were just as guilty. **Jesus** will repeat this later (see **Jd – Seven Woes on the Torah-teachers and Pharisees**), with more **woes** at that time.[1028]

**6. Woe to you** supposed **experts in the Torah, because you have taken away the key** that leads **to knowledge,** or **the LORD's** plan of salvation**. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering.** In other words, they had hidden the truth from those who depended on them for knowledge **(Luke 11:52). The Oral Law** did not, and does not reveal **ADONAI**, nor the demands that **God's** holiness makes on those who walk in fellowship with **Him**. Rather, **they** obscured **Ha'Shem** and **His** demands. **Christ** had come to offer light, but **the Pharisees** and **Torah-teachers** had bound the people in darkness.

**When Jesus left there, the Pharisees and the teachers of the Torah began to oppose Him fiercely and to besiege Him with questions, waiting to catch Him in something He might say (Luke 11:53-54).** This expression is used in **Acts 23:21** of people waiting in ambush to kill Rabbi Sha'ul. **The apostate Jewish leaders** lost **themselves** emotionally trying to get **Him** to say something that would violate either **the Torah** or **the Oral Law** so that **they** could bring a legal charge against **Him**. It was obvious that there could be no reconciliation between

**the Nazarene** and pharisaic Judaism.

It may surprise you that **Jesus** accepted **the Pharisee's** invitation to eat with **Him**. **The Lord** and **the Pharisees** always seemed to be in opposition to one another; disagreements and arguments were a regular part of **their** interaction. **Messiah** knew that **the Pharisee** invited **Christ** for the specific purpose of setting a theological trap, so **he** could discover some way that **the Galilean Rabbi** violated **the Oral Law**. So why would **Yeshua** accept such an invitation and walk into the lion's den?

When **Jesus** taught the Sermon on the Mount **He** said: **You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you,"Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you"** (see **Dm – You Have Heard It Said: Love Your Neighbor**)**. Christ** cared enough about that **man** to confront **him** with **his** sin? Do you have someone like that in your life? Someone who cares enough about you to risk their friendship? Do you know what that person is called? That person is called a friend, and **Jesus** was a friend to prostitutes and sinners. Those **Pharisees and Torah-teachers** were **sinners**, and there was no one else in the whole world that could confront **them** with **their sin** like **the Master**. This might seem mean, or tough – too tough for your taste maybe – but, loving nonetheless.

If you are the parent of a teenager you understand what I am talking about. Sometime tough equals love, and letting someone sin up a storm without any accountability is . . . what? You fill in the blank. But, it isn't love. Here, **Jesus** was practicing what **He** had been preaching. **He** was **loving His enemy**, and no doubt, **praying for** this hateful **Pharisee** who **persecuted Him**. In fact, **the Son of Righteousness** would soon be slaughtered like **a lamb** in the next few months.