**The Key to Knowledge**

**Luke 11:37-54**

**Key verse 52**

**“Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering.”**

**Introduction**

 **Today’s passage shows that Jesus pronounces six woes on the religious leaders: the Pharisees and experts in the law. They might have felt superior to others in that they had God’s laws. However from Jesus’ view they had problems, especially inside of them. May the Lord help us to pay attention to Jesus’ words so that we may be clean before God’s eyes.**

1. **Read verses 37 - 41. Who invited Jesus after he had finished speaking? (37) What did he notice about Jesus? (38) How did Jesus rebuke him? (39 - 41) What makes the inside of the cup dirty? (39) Why did Jesus call the Pharisees foolish people? (40) How can we clean ‘everything’? (41)**

**1-1, Read verses 37 - 41.**

 **When Jesus had finished speaking, a Pharisee invited him to eat with him; so he went in and reclined at the table. 38 But the Pharisee was surprised when he noticed that Jesus did not first wash before the meal. 39 Then the Lord said to him, “Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. 40 You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? 41 But now as for what is inside you—be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you.**

**1-2, Who invited Jesus after he had finished speaking? (37)**

**a Pharisee**

 **The Pharisees are considered to be the spiritual fathers of modern** [**Judaism**](https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaism.html)**. Their main distinguishing characteristic was a belief in an** [**Oral Law**](https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/Oral_Law.html) **that God gave to** [**Moses**](https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/moses.html) **at Sinai along with the** [**Torah**](https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Bible/jpstoc.html)**. The** [**Torah**](https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Bible/jpstoc.html)**, or** [**Written Law**](https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/The_Written_Law.html)**, was akin to the U.S. Constitution in the sense that it set down a series of laws that were open to interpretation. The Pharisees believed that God also gave** [**Moses**](https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/moses.html) **the knowledge of what these laws meant and how they should be applied. This oral tradition was codified and written down roughly three centuries later in what is known as the** [**Talmud**](https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Talmud/talmudtoc.html)**.**

 **The whole Talmud consists of 63 tractates, and in standard print is over 6,200 pages long. It is written in** [**Tannaitic Hebrew**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mishnaic_Hebrew) **and Aramaic. The Talmud contains the teachings and opinions of thousands of rabbis on a variety of subjects, including** [**Halakha**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halakha) **(law), Jewish ethics, philosophy, customs,** [**history**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History)**, lore and many other topics. The Talmud is the basis for all codes of** [**Jewish law**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halakha) **and is much quoted in rabbinic literature.**

**1-3, What did he notice about Jesus? (38)**

 ***Jesus did not first wash before the meal.***

* **Now it is a good idea to wash your hands.**
* **But this Pharisee was not thinking about hygiene.**
* **He was thinking about the ceremonial washing of hands that religious people would do to avoid eating anything unclean.**
* **But what we must realize is that hand washing was only a religious tradition, it was mentioned no where in the commandment of God.**
* **It was arrogance on the part of the Pharisees to treat their own rules and traditions being absolute as much as the Holy Scriptures.**

**1-4, How did Jesus rebuke him? (39 - 41)**

 ***Then the Lord said to him, “Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. 40 You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? 41 But now as for what is inside you—be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you.***

**1-5, What makes the inside of the cup dirty? (39)**

 ***Greed and wickedness***

* **The Pharisees looked good on the outside.**
* **Just as they did their best to clean their cups and dishes, they made a great effort to appear holy before people by taking baths, wearing the right clothes(Matthews 23:5) and displaying their credentials.**
* **But inside they were greedy and wicked. God was sorry that they emphasized outward cleanliness while their inner lives were rotten with selfishness and materialism.**
* **These elements blind one's spiritual eyes.**

**1-6, Why did Jesus call the Pharisees foolish people? (40)**

***Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also?***

* **According to the book of Genesis, God created a human being out of dirt.**
* **On top of external figure, God created our inside in accordance with His own image and likeness.**
* **Many of us often pretend to be holier than we really are.**
* **Many of us come to Sunday Worship looking like we are ready to worship on the outside, but inside full of wickedness and greed.**
* **Maybe the desire for money, or pornography, or some other wicked desire is in your heart.**
* **It’s time to wash the inside of the cup. It is harder than washing the outside for it is unseen.**
* **Only our pride keeps us from repenting and confessing our sins.**
* **In Luke 18, Jesus told a parable “to some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else.”**
* **He described the prayer of two men. “The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’**
* **But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’”**

**Romans 7:13-20 read,**

 **Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! Nevertheless, in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it used what is good to bring about my death, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.**

**1-7, How can we clean ‘everything’? (41)**

 ***But now as for what is inside you—be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you.***

* **Thank God for helping us to know how to clean the inside of us.**
* **Jesus says, *“*be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you.”**
* **It means that if you want to be clean on the inside, practice your faith in obeying Jesus’ command, “Love your neighbors as yourselves.”**
* **Do actual, real things to show your love for others. Practice all of those ideas that you know are right to do.**
1. **Read verses 42 - 45. Why did Jesus say, “Woe to you Pharisees”? (42 - 44) What did Jesus ask them to practice? (42b) How did one of the experts in the law answer Jesus? (45)**

**2-1, Read verses 42 - 45.**

 **“Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone. 43 “Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and respectful greetings in the marketplaces. 44 “Woe to you, because you are like unmarked graves, which people walk over without knowing it.” 45 One of the experts in the law answered him, “Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also.”**

**2-2, Why did Jesus say, “Woe to you Pharisees”? (42-44)**

 ***“Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone. 43 “Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and respectful greetings in the marketplaces. 44 “Woe to you, because you are like unmarked graves, which people walk over without knowing it.” 45 One of the experts in the law answered him, “Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also.”***

* **The word, “woe” is not a daily word but an expression of grief, regret, or distress.**
* **It is a very strong word.**
* **A future of grief, regret, and distress, greater than you have ever imagined awaits you in the fire of hell.**
* **When we ponder the meaning of woe, we understand how important it is to repent any hint of hypocrisy.**

* **Jesus’ rebuke must have been given in love. His proclamation of woe is a call to repentance.**
* **Jesus’ rebuke is not for the sake of rebuking; it is given to help people to repent.**
* **He really wants the Pharisees to repent. And in turn he really wants us to repent.**
* **Let us now think about Jesus’ three woe’s.**

 ***42 “Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs,***

* **Because, after being so careful to keep the law of tithing at its most exact level, they then turned around and ignored the whole spirit of the law of God.**
* **They endeavored to tithe a tenth of their garden herbs but neglected justice and the love of God.**
* **In other words, they majored on the minors.**
* **Jesus compared this attitude to straining a gnat, but letting a huge camel get through. It is a product of hypocrisy.**

***43 “Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and respectful greetings in the marketplaces.***

* **People love to be recognized.**
* **We often feel that we don’t get recognized. But we know Jesus’ example of greatness. (Philippians 2)**
* **If we want to be great, we can become great in God’s sight, by humbling ourselves and serve others.**

**John 5:44 reads,**

 **“How can you believe since you accept glory from one another but do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?”**

 ***44 “Woe to you, because you are like unmarked graves, which people walk over without knowing it.”***

* **There is a passage in Lev 19 that indicates that a Jewish person would become ceremonially unclean, if he touches a grave.**
* **Usually graves have headstones, so that a person could recognize and avoid it.**
* **Or at least, if they did touch the grave, they could know so that they could take the steps to be purified.**
* **But these Pharisees were like unmarked graves, which men walk over without knowing it.**
* **The Pharisees were like a grave full of unclean bones, but you could not tell by looking at them.**
* **Like a hypocrite, there was no visible indication of the uncleanliness hidden under the surface.**
* **They were unclean. But what was worse, they made others unclean.**

**2-3, What did Jesus ask them to practice? (42b)**

 ***because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone.***

**Matthew 23:23-24 read,**

 **“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. 24 You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.**



* **Jesus said, “You should have practiced the latter, without leaving the former undone.”**
* **It is good to keep the law of tithing, but it is more important to keep the law of justice and love.**
* **In Isaiah chapter 1, God is displeased with the injustice of his people.**
* **He rebukes their hypocrisy in committing violence and then trying to bring an offering to God with their bloody hands.**
* **It is a serious mistake to neglect justice, which God is so concerned about. Our world is filled with injustice, but God is just and so should be his people.**
* **They must have forgotten the fact that they were incorrigible sinners who needed God’s grace and mercy and faithfulness.**
* **They must humble themselves in order to be exalted by God only.**
* **They also neglected the love of God(in Matthew’s gospel, mercy and faithfulness instead).**
* **The greatest commandment is to love the Lord our God with all of our heart and soul and mind and strength.**
* **And the second greatest commandment is like it, to love our neighbor as ourselves.**
* **When the love of God is in our hearts, we love God, and experience his love for us.**
* **We see others as God sees them and love them with the love of God. When the love of God is in our hearts, we are beautiful, loving people.**
* **The Pharisees’ hypocrisy was ugly.**
* **Their austere and judgmental attitude turned people off.**
* **It was because they tithed a tenth of their herbs but neglected justice and the love of God.**

* **We also, can easily become caught up in side issues, and major on the minors.**
* **We may not tithe a tenth of the herbs in our garden, but we may do equivalent work, such as faithfully writing a testimony each week.**
* **Again, there is nothing wrong with this – Jesus agreed that they were right to tithe their herbs.**
* **But, if, after being so careful to do these things, like carefully getting up each morning to pray and write daily bread – if, after doing all of these things in the morning, we then neglect justice and the love of God all day long, then what good is it?**
* **It is missing the point. It is majoring on the minors.**

**1 Corinthians 13:1-3 read,**

 **If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.**

**2-4, How did one of the experts in the law answer Jesus? (45)**

 ***One of the experts in the law answered him, “Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also.”***

* **As Jesus spoke plainly to the Pharisee, a teacher of the law began to feel very uncomfortable.**
* **It seems that Jesus was shaking the apple cart. Why bother?**

* **He said to Jesus, “Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also.”**
* **He used the word, “insult.”**
* **In fact, Jesus did not insult, but rebuke. Many people do not know the difference between an insult and a rebuke.**
* **So they take a rebuke personally, but they don’t take it to heart.**
* **If you are rebuked by someone, please recognize the love of Jesus and his servants(mentors or shepherds or Bible teachers) who rebuked people so that they might repent for their good.**
* **Again do not feel insulted, or rather, realize that the reason you feel that way is your sin, not the persons rebuke.**
* **Jesus did not apologize. Jesus began to rebuke the teachers of the law out of his love. He also gave them three specific topics of instruction.**
* **Let us move on to the next question.**
1. **Read verses 46 - 51. What did Jesus say about them? (46-48) In what respect were they held responsible? (49-51)**

**3-1, Read verses 46 - 51.**

 **Jesus replied, “And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them. 47 “Woe to you, because you build tombs for the prophets, and it was your ancestors who killed them. 48 So you testify that you approve of what your ancestors did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs. 49 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.’ 50 Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world,51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all.**

**3-2, What did Jesus say about them? (46-48)**

 ***Jesus replied, “And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them. 47 “Woe to you, because you build tombs for the prophets, and it was your ancestors who killed them. 48 So you testify that you approve of what your ancestors did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs.***

* **In origin, the scribes were the writers, copyists, 'bookmen' and consequently the interpreters of the sacred writings of the Old Testament, as their professional occupation gave them unusual familiarity with these books.**
* **Among the forerunners of the scribes were also to be reckoned 'wise' teachers of Israel who produced and handed on a body of oral teaching and eventually the compendium of Wisdom Literature..**
* **After the Exile, the scribe tended to take the place of the priest as teacher of the Law.**
* **In the Gospels the scribes are sometimes referred to as 'lawyers', *i.e*. Experts in the sacred Mosaic Law which was in theory the sole legislation, civil and religious, governing the Jewish people.**
* **They were usually associated with the Pharisees.**
* **Many of the scribes became members of the Sanhedrin, the highest legal administration body in the Jewish theocratic state.**
* **Among them were Gamaliel in Acts 5, Nicodemus in John 3 and 7. They sat 'on Moses' seat' (Mt 23:2) as official interpreters of the Law.**
* **They had the power of 'binding and loosing,' *i.e.* Of issuing authoritative judgments or decisions upon the legality or illegality of actions..**
* **Their services, both educational and judicial, were rendered freely and without compensation.**
* **Unless he possessed independent means the scribe had to earn a livelihood in other ways.**
* **It has been suggested that the rule grew out of the danger of bribery.**
* **The experts in the law had many rules that they just made up, like washing hands, or exactly how much you could carry on the Sabbath.**
* **They call these rules of their own invention, “making a hedge around the law.” They interpret the law so strictly because they want to be sure not to break it.**

* **The effect was to drive people away from God, and to lower God’s law to the same standard as their own rules.**
* **But this is not the way of Christ, who came to set men free.**
* **Jesus proclaimed, *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”* (Mt 11:28-30)**

* **These experts in the law saw people staggering under heavy loads, but would not lift a finger to help them.**

**3-3, In what respect were they held responsible? (49-51)**

***49 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.’ 50 Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world,51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all.***

* **When the religious leaders did not repent, they were doomed to repeat the mistakes of their forefathers.**
* **When we do not learn from history, we inevitably end up repeating it.**
* **These hypocritical people thought that they were better than their forefathers, because they built tombs to honor the prophets that their fathers had killed.**
* **But, then, they were about to kill Jesus, which was even worse.**
* **So they would be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world.**
1. **Read verses 52 - 54. What does it mean by “the key to knowledge” and “taking away the key to knowledge”? (52) What would happen to themselves and others? (52b) How did the Pharisees and the teachers of the law oppose Jesus? (53, 54) What can we learn from this passage?**

**4-1, Read verses 52 - 54.**

 **“Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering.” 53 When Jesus went outside, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him with questions, 54 waiting to catch him in something he might say.**

**4-2, What does it mean by “the key to knowledge” and “taking away the key to knowledge”? (52)**

 ***“Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering.”***

**John 5:39 reads,**

 **You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me to have life.**

* **They were blessed to study the Scriptures and were called as experts of the law. However they refused to come to Jesus to have life.**
* **As Bible experts, they held this key.**
* **“Key of knowledge” has to do with knowing who Jesus is.**
* **But, by leading people away from the grace of God and towards their own rules, they closed the door of knowledge in men’s faces.**

**4-3, What would happen to themselves and others? (52b)**

***You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering.”***

* **By rejecting Jesus, they denied salvation of themselves and to their followers.**
* **First is first, you yourselves have not entered.**
* **And you have hindered those who were entering.**
* **It occurred because they were wrongly exalted as the learned and accurate expert teachers—the only guru who could truly understand the Scriptures.**
* **With them, there would no longer be any need for individuals to seek out truth directly from the Scriptures for themselves.**
* **“Seekers” could take a shortcut to easy, instant understanding by going to those exalted (false) spiritual leaders, who have the degrees and are in places of honor and influence.**

* **As that horrible thing occurred in Jesus’ day, it has been repeated over and over in our time.**
* **People are wrongly going to the** [**TV**](http://www.evangelicaloutreach.org/tv.htm) **and radio teachers or authors, their priest, their rabbi, their pastor, and the seminary professors.**
* **The answer is simple, but has been made manipulated and complicated.**
* **During the dark ages the Bible was locked away from common man, but now learning the real truth has been blocked in so many subtle ways.**
* **People are still being lethally deceived and walking in darkness.**
* **There are no quick, easy shortcuts to knowledge.**
* **We must go back to the Bible and have revelation about who Jesus is in person.**

**Proverbs 2:1-6 read,**

 **My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, 2 turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding—3 indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, 4 and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, 5 then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. 6 For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.**

**Psalms 119-97-100 read,**

**Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. 98 Your commands are always with me and make me wiser than my enemies. 99 I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. 100 I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.**

**4-4, How did the Pharisees and the teachers of the law oppose Jesus? (53, 54)**

***When Jesus went outside, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him with questions, 54 waiting to catch him in something he might say.***

* **They were now in the same boat in rejecting and opposing Jesus.**
* **Religious leaders did not accept Jesus rebuke, but began to oppose him fiercely. The felt insulted.**
* **They must have thought that they’re right and Jesus is wrong!**
* **In fact, when people are rebuked, they often get angry.**
* **Let us accept Jesus rebuke and repent and change. May justice and the love of God be the thoughts in our hearts.**
* **We may heed these warnings, so that we do not find ourselves in woe. Instead we may experience the blessings of God.**

**4-5, What can we learn from this passage?**

**Conclusion**

 **Today, by God’s grace we now hold the key to knowledge, for we mean business to know what the Bible says about Jesus our Lord and King. When we teach the Bible, we are unlocking this door, and bringing people into the kingdom of God. What a great blessing it is! Let us not make the same mistakes of the Pharisees and the experts in the law. Let us not teach our own ideas and traditions. Again, we must get into the Bible for ourselves to know the truth. The Bible is 100% truth and the only source which is fully trustworthy. To neglect them is to place our souls in harm’s way. So let us come to Jesus’ words daily and bring people to meet Jesus through Bible study.**

 **One Word: Key to knowledge!**