

Try reading Ecclesiastes before Passover

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BIG SANDY, Texas—Have you ever considered how the book of Ecclesiastes can help you prepare for the New Testament Passover?

Oh, I realize that some religions traditionally read the book of Ecclesiastes during the Feast of Tabernacles. But can you see how this book helps you approach the Passover?

Consider the theme of the book for a minute. The author is searching for the meaning of life.

He begins his book with a thesis: "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 1:2).

Not a very positive beginning, is it?

At first glance this book is not an optimistic book. Although most people would find the conclusion to be positive, many people would in fact consider the tone throughout the rest of the book to be pessimistic.

What is the value in that?

His personal journey

The beauty of the book of Ecclesiastes is that it promotes a realistic view of life: Life is a journey.

As you read the book of Ecclesiastes, you are watching the process of a man searching for the meaning of life.

Recognizing his accurate conclusion in Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 is informative. But I believe that understanding his process of reaching the conclusion is revealing and most edifying.

Notice some of the personal experiences the author had on his journey. He talked about striving after the following: wisdom (1:12-18), pleasure (2:1-3), great accomplishments (2:4-17) and hard labor (2:18-23).

He revealed some of his goals and emphases. He showed how those goals and emphases changed in his life. He expressed his reaction to his experiences.

He was learning from his experiences.

Keeping score

An important personal lesson from Ecclesiastes is to recognize your journey in this life. By clearly seeing your journey in life, you may have a more realistic view about how you see yourself and others.

■ Are you worthy enough to take the Passover this year? I mean, have you done enough good things this year and avoided enough bad behavior this year to take the Passover?

How does your score sheet look? Is your batting average good enough? Is your shooting percentage high enough?

■ Do you deem other people worthy enough to take the Passover this year? I mean, have they done enough good things this year and avoided enough bad behavior this year to take the Passover?

How does their score sheet look? Are they in the right physical organization? Do they have the same knowledge as you do?

God's job

Part of the conclusion in Ecclesiastes 12 was: "God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14).

It's God's job to judge other people.

For the record, I understand that Jesus gave us instruction about what to do if someone sins against us (Matthew 18:15; Luke 17:3-4).

Plus, I understand that Paul gave us instruction about how to help people with their faults (Galatians 6:1).

But Jesus, Paul and James also clearly told us not to judge (Matthew 7:1-5; Romans 14:10-12; James 4:11-12).

Every person is on a journey. The Father and Son know the progress on the journey.

Valuable lesson

The other part of the conclusion in Ecclesiastes 12 was: "Fear God and keep His commandments" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

If you think you should take the Passover because you believe you have arrived at worthiness, you have not learned the meaning of life.

The more you reverence God and love His instructions, the further you are on your journey.