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The First Summary: A Backward Glance Over Ecclesiastes 1:1 to 4:8



So far, in our survey of **life under the sun**, we have looked at what the world can offer at four or five different levels. We begin with an impression of its utter restlessness, the endless, inconclusive repetitions to be found in nature and in humanity (**to see link click Cc – The Failure of Earthly Things**). Then we sampled the satisfactions of different life-styles, rational and irrational, foolish and wise; pleasures of rest and work, of the moment and building for the future (see **Cd – The Search for Satisfaction**). If some of these had much to give, none survived the acid test of **death**. To find anything that **time** would not undo, who should have to look elsewhere. But in the meantime, **God** calls us to make the best use of every moment (see **Cj – All in Good Time**) because **Messiah** is **the Master** of time.

A more sinister note crept in at **Ecclesiastes 3:16** with the theme of human **injustice** and **wickedness**. That bitter fact that can make **death**, even at its most hopeless, seem no longer the last enemy, as it was seen in **Chapter 2** (see **Cg – Death Renders Wisdom and Folly Pointless**), but the hope of the resurrection (see **Ck – Death and Injustice**).

Finally, we contemplated not the losers in this human struggle, but the apparent winners and survivors; those who have supposedly come to terms with life. They have won the “so-called” prize, but can they keep it? The term, rat-race, sums up the weight of these verses: a frantic rivalry at one extreme, a disastrous surrender

at the other, and for the successful few, a life devoted to acquiring prize after **pointless** prize.

After this merciless assessment, it will be a relief to turn for a while from our desperate search for something worthwhile **under the sun**, to matters close at hand. For life does go on while we are searching, and there are better and worse ways of living it. We can be wise at this level at least! For a start, we can be more sensible than the lonely, obsessive miser we were last considering **(4:7-8)**. And a wiser pattern of life than his will be the first subject of the commentary on life that follows (see **Cn – Interlude: Some Reflections, Maxims and Home Truths**).[283]