

Job Chapter 24

Job 24:1 "Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know him not see his days?"

"Times not hidden": Job believed that God knew the appointed times for all activities under the sun (Eccl. 3:1-8), but he bemoaned the fact that God did not inform man about them.

This was Job saying that if we truly know God, we would see Him in the things that He does. God from time to time reveals Himself to man. Sometimes this is a time of separating the evil men from those who are following God. God may allow the evil ones to continue in their evil for a good long time, but there is a day of reckoning.

Verses 2-12: This is one of the most graphic pictures of oppression and the "poor" found in the Bible. Job wondered how the wicked can live this way and still escape divine justice (Psalm 10:8)

Job 24:2 "[Some] remove the landmarks; they violently take away flocks, and feed [thereof]."

"Remove the landmarks": This ancient practice is addressed (in Deut. 19:14; Prov. 22:28; 23:10). "Some remove the landmarks". Corrupt landowners often did this to increase their holdings, particularly where the land was owned by bereaved widows. Taking advantage of widows will be treated by the ultimate court in heaven.

Job 24:3 "They drive away the ass of the fatherless, they take the widow's ox for a pledge."

Whose helpless condition required their pity and mercy. He says, the ass, to aggravate their sin, in that they robbed those who had but one ass.

"They take the widow's ox": Thereby depriving her, not only of the ox itself, but of all the benefit of its labors, by which her life was sustained.

"For a pledge": Contrary to God's law, first written in men's hearts, and afterward in the Holy Scriptures (Exodus 22:26).

Job 24:4 "They turn the needy out of the way: the poor of the earth hide themselves together."

This is a general expression for doing them wrong, hindering them of their just rights (compare Amos 5:12). The last clause;

"The poor of the earth hide themselves together": Seems to sum up the general effect of the preceding wrongs. The poor, violently dispossessed of what belonged to them, or stripped through forms of law little different from violence; "for a pledge" (Job 24:3). And deprived of their fields, are forced to hide themselves away from men, among whom they had formerly lived in respect, and huddle together in obscure haunts.

These were not accusations against Job. This was Job telling of some of the sins of the evil people upon the earth. It may even appear that they were getting away without punishment, but God was keeping a record of it all.

Job 24:5 "Behold, [as] wild asses in the desert, go they forth to their work; rising betimes for a prey: the wilderness [yieldeth] food for them [and] for [their] children."

The word "as" is a supplement, and may be omitted. And the words be interpreted literally of wild asses, as they are by Sephorno, whose proper place is in the wilderness, to which they are used, and where their food is provided for them, and which they diligently seek for them and their young. And so, the words may be descriptive of the place where the poor hide themselves, and of the company they are obliged to keep. But the Targum supplies the note of similitude as we do; and others observe it to be wanting. And so, it may respect wicked men before described, who may be compared to the wild asses of the wilderness for their folly and stupidity, man being born like a wild ass's colt (Job 11:12). And for their lust and wantonness and for their rebellion against God and his laws, and their being unteachable. Perhaps some regard may be had to the wild Arabs that were in Job's neighborhood. The descendants of Ishmael, called the wild man, (as he is in Genesis 16:12); who lived by plunder and robbery, as these here.

"They go forth to their work": Of thieving and stealing, robbing and plundering. As their trade, and business, and occupation of life, and as naturally and constantly as men go to their lawful employment, and as if it was one.

"Rising betimes for a prey": Getting up early in a morning to meet the industrious traveler on the road, and make a prey of him. Rob him of what he has about him; for they cannot sleep unless they do mischief.

"The wilderness yieldeth food for them, and for their children": Though they are lurking in a wilderness where no sustenance is to be had. Yet, by robbing everyone that passes by, they get enough for them and their families. Though some understand all this of the poor, who are obliged to hide themselves from their oppressors, and go into the wilderness in droves like wild asses, and as timorous and as swift as they in fleeing. And are forced to hard service, and to rise early to earn their bread, and get sustenance for their families; and who in the main are obliged to live on berries and roots, and what a wild desert will afford. But the, word "prey" is not applicable to the pains and labors of such industrious people, wherefore the former sense is best; and besides, there seems to be one continued account of wicked men.

Job was speaking of the evil people as being like wild asses. They were almost impossible to train. They would rather run free. The evil people did not want any controls either. They wanted to be free to sin. They lived of the world. This could be speaking of the wicked bands of robbers

who wandered in the desert and tried to catch a traveler who was helpless. They plundered his goods and money, and sometimes killed him.

Job 24:6 "They reap [every one] his corn in the field: and they gather the vintage of the wicked."

The words, "every one", are not in the original, and ought not to have been inserted here, as they alter the sense. The clause would be better translated without them. "They reap his corn in the field": That is, these plunderers make incursions, reap and take away the corn of the honest, industrious farmers, which he had sown for the support of his family.

"They gather the vintage of the wicked": Or, rather, the vintage of wickedness; that is, they plunder the vineyards of the honest, just man, as well as his cornfields.

This was saying that the robbers sometimes ventured in close to the dwellings of the people and robbed the corn in their field. They also steal the grapes from their vines. They had no thought for anyone else's property.

Job 24:7 "They cause the naked to lodge without clothing, that [they have] no covering in the cold."

"Cause the naked": It was common practice to take an outer garment as a pledge for money owed. But Old Testament law forbade keeping the garment at night since its owner could get cold and sick (compare 24:10).

They would leave their victims without clothing to cover them. They did not care if they faced the cold night without clothing. It was said that these marauding men sometimes slept at night naked themselves.

Job 24:8 "They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for want of a shelter."

That is, the poor, being stripped of their raiment, and forced away from their houses.

"With the showers of the mountains": With the rain water, which, in great showers, runs down from the rocks or mountains into the caves or holes in the sides of them, to which they have fled for shelter.

"And embrace the rock": That is, are glad when they can find a cavern, or cleft of a rock, in which they may have some protection against the injuries of the weather, and a hiding place from the fury of their oppressors.

These marauding tribes bathed in the mountain streams and had no place to take shelter, but in caves near a protective rock.

Job 24:9 "They pluck the fatherless from the breast, and take a pledge of the poor."

The wicked oppressors.

"Pluck the fatherless from the breast": Either out of cruelty, not sparing poor infants, or out of covetousness, not allowing the mother time for the suckling of her infant.

"And take a pledge of the poor": That single sheaf, which the poor man had got with the sweat of his brow, to satisfy his hunger.

This was speaking of "loan sharks" taking the babies that were still nursing from their mothers, to pay a debt. They had no pity on anyone. They took anything the poor had to pledge, before they would loan them anything. This was strictly forbidden in God's law.

Job 24:10 "They cause [him] to go naked without clothing, and they take away the sheaf [from] the hungry;"

The poor oppressed person.

"To go naked without clothing": Leaving him nothing, or next to nothing, to cover him in the day time, when he should go abroad to his labor to get his living, but cannot for want of clothes to cover his nakedness.

"And they take away the sheaf from the hungry": That single sheaf which the poor man had got with the sweat of his brows to satisfy his hunger, they inhumanly take away, and add it to their own stores and full barns. Or, they are hungry; or they sent them away hungry. Those words being repeated out of the former clause of the verse (as is most usual); which took or carried the sheaf, or their sheaves.

These people who loaned money to the poor and then took everything they had, were very evil. It appears the poor man's only clothing had been taken in pledge, and then taken from the poor man when he could not pay. The same was true of the grain that he had raised. The poor man and his family faced hunger, because of the ruthless confiscation from the man who loaned them money.

Job 24:11 "[Which] make oil within their walls, [and] tread [their] winepresses, and suffer thirst."

To wit, the poor man last mentioned.

"Within their walls": either,

- (1) Within their own walls, i.e. in private and secret places, for fear of the oppressors. Or rather;
- (2) Within the walls of the rich oppressors, for their use and benefit.

For the poor, alas, had no walls, nor houses, nor oliveyards, nor vineyards left to them, but they were violently spoiled of and driven away from all those things, as was said in the foregoing verses.

"And tread their wine-presses": I.e. the grapes in their wine presses, by a substitution of the thing containing for the thing contained.

"And suffer thirst": Because they are not permitted to quench their thirst out of the wine which they make, though their labor's both need and deserve refreshment.

The oppressors were making wine with the grapes they had stolen from the very people they were forcing to run the winepress. The person who grew the grapes did not get any of the wine.

Job 24:12 "Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out: yet God layeth not folly [to them]."

"Yet God layeth not folly to them": This is a stinging accusation from Job. Human courts prosecuted offenders for most of these social crimes. Job, in essence, was saying "if human courts punish the wicked. Then why doesn't God?"

These oppressions were not just isolated to the countryside. There were those who are oppressed by the same people in the city. It appears that this type of treatment was going unnoticed by the LORD. They might not be paying for their sins at the time they were committing them, but you can be assured that God was keeping a record of it all, and they would have to suffer punishment for such cruel acts.

Job 24:13 "They are of those that rebel against the light; they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof."

Who sin impudently, in the face of the sun, and obstinately, in spite of all their light, as well the light of reason and conscience. Which abhors and condemns their wicked actions, as the light of divine revelation, which was then, in good measure, imparted to the people of God. And shortly after committed to writing; all which they set at defiance, sinning with manifest contempt of God, and of men, and of their own consciences.

"They know not the ways thereof": That is, of the light, or such ways and courses as are agreeable to the light. They do not approve, love, or choose them.

"Nor abide in the paths thereof": If they begin to walk in those paths: and do some good actions, yet they do not persevere in well-doing. They are not constant and fixed in a good course of life.

These evil people had totally rejected the Light of God. They not only rejected it for themselves, but they tried to destroy those who had received it. They knew nothing about God and were not interested in learning of Him.

Job 24:14 "The murderer rising with the light killeth the poor and needy, and in the night is as a thief."

The murderer rises at the first glimpse of dawn, the time when most men sleep most soundly. He cannot go about his wicked business in complete darkness. He has not the courage to attack the

great and powerful, who might be well armed and have retainers to defend them, but enters the houses of a comparatively poor class, in which he is less afraid to risk himself.

"And in the night is as a thief": He has not come into the house simply for murder. Theft is his main object. He will not take life unless he is resisted or discovered, and so, in a certain sense, driven to it.

The murderer took advantage of the early morning even at the break of light to do his dirty work. This was usually the time when people were sleeping the soundest. He stole in total darkness, believing he would not be found out. What he did not realize was that nothing he did was hidden from God.

Job 24:15 "The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me: and disguiseth [his] face."

I.e. the adulterer; but he mentions his eye, because the eye discerns the difference between light and darkness.

"The twilight": To wit, for the evening twilight, which is his opportunity.

"Saying": in his heart, comforting himself with the thoughts of concealment and impunity.

"Disguiseth his face": Hebrew; putteth his face in secret such as covers it with a mask or cloak, that he may be undiscovered.

This twilight was a physical light just between daylight and dark. Adultery was one of the worst sins a person could commit at that time. Of course, in God's sight it is still a very serious sin. They believed they would not be punished for the sin of adultery, if no one knew about it. The two people involved knew about it, and God knew about it. All of the disguises and darkness in the world could not hide this sin from the Light of God.

Job 24:16 "In the dark they dig through houses, [which] they had marked for themselves in the daytime: they know not the light."

In ancient times, burglary commonly took this form. Windows were few, and high up in the walls; and doors were strongly fastened with bolts and bars. But the walls, being of clay, or rubble, or sun-dried brick, were weak and easily penetrable. This was especially the case with dividing walls; and if burglars entered an unoccupied house, nothing was easier than to break through the slight partition which separated it from the house next door. The Greek word for "burglar" is τριχώρυχος" he who digs through a wall."

"Which they had marked for themselves in the daytime": Rather, they shut themselves up in the daytime; literally, they seal themselves up. The meaning being that they carefully keep themselves close.

"They know not the light": I.e. they avoid it, keep away from it, and will have nothing to do with it.

It seems that in the daylight they picked out a house they planned to rob and marked it, so they could come back to it. In our day burglars ride around the neighborhood and find some family gone, and go in and rob their house. We are warned that newspapers in the yard or lights that have not been turned on and off for a few days, will tell the burglar that no one is home. These burglars were taking advantage of the weakened condition of the home-owner.

Job 24:17 "For the morning [is] to them even as the shadow of death: if [one] know [them, they are in] the terrors of the shadow of death."

They dread the light as one does usually the deepest darkness. The morning or light would reveal their deeds of wickedness, and they therefore avoid it.

"As the shadow of death": As the deepest darkness (see notes on Job 3:5).

"If one know them": If they are recognized. Or, more probably, this means "they," that is, each one of them, "are familiar with the terrors of the shadow of death," or with the deepest darkness.

"The terrors of the shadow of death": Meaning the grossest darkness of the night, which to other men is as terrible as the shadow of death, but to these men is most acceptable. So this clause is fitly opposed to the former; he hates the light, and he likes darkness.

The burglars in the lesson here, were afraid they would be found out if it was daylight. They knew if they were caught in the act of burglary, they would probably be killed.

Verses 18:25: Job angrily denounced the wicked. Compare his words to those found in Psalms (e.g., Psalms Chapters 35, 69, 109, 140). Within his soul, Job still believed that God would judge evildoers in His time.

(In verses 18-21), again Job referred to the opinions of his counselors, saying that if their view were correct, all the wicked should be experiencing punishment. But it is obvious they were not.

Job 24:18 "He [is] swift as the waters; their portion is cursed in the earth: he beholdeth not the way of the vineyards."

That is, the wicked man quickly passes away, with all his glory, as the waters, which never stay in one place, but are always hastening away.

"Their portion": Or, his portion (for he still speaks of the same person, though with a change of the number).

"Is cursed in the earth": His habitation and estate, which he leaves behind him, is accused of God; and by all men who live near it or observe it, is pronounced accursed, because of the remarkable judgments of God upon it. And upon his posterity or family, to which he left it, and from whom it is strangely and unexpectedly alienated.

"He beholdeth not the way of the vineyards": "He shall never more see or enjoy his vineyards, or other pleasant places and things, which seem to be comprehended by this verse. Thus, though Job constantly maintains against his friends, that many ungodly men do prosper, and escape punishment in this life. Yet, he asserts that God will certainly, sooner or later, punish them. And that he sometimes does it here by cutting them off by cruel and untimely deaths, or otherwise inflicting some notable judgment upon them, of which he also speaks (Job 21:17).

This was possibly speaking of the swift judgement that came upon the burglars who were found out. God would not bring them blessings, but curses for their sins.

Job 24:19 "Drought and heat consume the snow waters: [so doth] the grave [those which] have sinned."

This rendering is further confirmed by the next verse. Accepting it, we must suppose Job to pass at this point to the consideration of the ultimate end of the wicked, though (in verse 21), he returns to the consideration of their ill doings. The heat and drought of summer, he says, consume and dry up all the water which comes from the melting of the winter's snows. So does Sheol, or the grave, absorb and as it were consume, the wicked.

This was speaking of the punishment on those who have sinned and not repented being just as certain as the snow melting during a drought and heat. He was calling hell the grave in this particular instance.

Job 24:20 "The womb shall forget him; the worm shall feed sweetly on him; he shall be no more remembered; and wickedness shall be broken as a tree."

His mother that bare him, and much more the rest of his friends, shall seldom or never mention or remember him. But shall rather be ashamed to own their relation to one that lived such a vile and wretched life, and died such an accursed death. This portion he shall have, instead of that honor and renown which he thirsted and labored for, and expected should perfume his name and memory.

"The worm shall feed sweetly on him": This proud and insolent tyrant that preyed upon all his neighbors shall himself become a prey to the contemptible worms.

"He shall be no more remembered": Namely, with honor, or so as to be desired; but his name shall rot, and scarcely ever be mentioned but with infamy.

"And wickedness shall be broken": The wicked man shall be broken to pieces, or violently broken down, as the word tishaber, signifies. Shall be utterly and irrecoverably destroyed.

"As a tree": Which being once broken never grows again.

This was speaking of someone so evil, that even his own mother forgot him. The only thing that enjoyed him after death, was the worms that ate his body. This wickedness would not be allowed to continue. They would be broken off from life, like a dead limb was broken off a tree.

Job 24:21 "He evil entreateth the barren [that] beareth not: and doeth not good to the widow."

Oppressors of another class are perhaps here spoken of, or perhaps there is a mere return to the idea with which Job's enumeration opened (verse 3). Which was the oppression of the weaker and more defenseless classes. As barrenness in women was considered the greatest possible misfortune (1 Sam. 1:5-8; 3:1-10), so oppressing one that was barren indicated extreme cruelty.

"And doeth not good to the widow": I.e. neglects to vindicate her cause. An admitted part of man's duty (see Job 22:9; 29:13; 31:16).

This was speaking of this evil man tormenting the poor woman who could not have children. He took advantage of the widow who could not protect herself.

Verses 22-25: Job's view was that their punishment would come eventually ("exalted for a little while"). Retribution needed the timing of God's wisdom, when He determined wrongs would be made right. Job was totally confident that his point could not be refuted.

Job 24:22 "He draweth also the mighty with his power: he riseth up, and no [man] is sure of life."

Rather as above, he continueth the mighty, i.e., He (God), prolonged their life and continueth them in their place. The "mighty" are the oppressive lords of the soil (Job 24:2). And it is God that upholds them by His power (compare Job 9:24).

"He riseth up, and no man is sure of life": Rather as above. Even when they fall under calamity or sickness and "believe not that they shall live," I.e. despair of recovery or of regaining their former prosperity. They are raised up again, their life and power being prolonged.

This was just saying that the evil men gathered together, so their combined threat would be greater. These evil men saw that no one could be sure they would not kill them. They were not just robbers, but murderers as well.

Job 24:23 "[Though] it be given him [to be] in safety, whereon he resteth; yet his eyes [are] upon their ways."

Rather, he (i.e. God) grants him to be in security and thereon he resteth. I.e. God allows the escape of the wicked man from his trouble, and lets him live on, safe and secure. And the man himself rests on the security thus afforded him, quite contented with it.

"Yet his eyes are upon their ways": God's eyes are still upon the ways of the wicked: they are, or seem to be, the objects of a special providential care.

God's eyes were on these wicked men. It might appear for a time that they did not get caught and they were safe, but God marked it all down to deal with them later.

Job 24:24 "They are exalted for a little while, but are gone and brought low; they are taken out of the way as all [other], and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn."

This verse is obscure but seems to be a plea for the Almighty to set times of judgment. Those who know God do not see such days. The entire chapter is spent listing various crimes and criminals, the implication being that they carry on their wicked activity with no divine intervention.

These wicked men might appear to prosper for a while, but they would die as all other men, and then would come the judgement of God upon them for their evil deeds.

Job 24:25 "And if [it be] not [so] now, who will make me a liar, and make my speech nothing worth?"

Job concluded his rant against the injustice of the world by challenging God and his friends to "make me a liar" and that he was wrong. The larger context of the book demonstrates that Job was certain that God knew him and the truth of his character, but his words here reveal how vexed he was by the extent of his suffering (Psalm 11:4).

"Who will make me a liar?" Who can disprove what I am saying?

Job was expressing the desire for someone to come forward and prove him wrong, if he was.

Job Chapter 24 Questions

1. What was Job saying in verse 1?
2. God may allow the evil one to continue for a while, but there is a day of _____.
3. What were some of the sins that these evil people committed, that Job listed in verses 2, 3, and 4?
4. These were not accusations against _____.
5. What were the evil men compared to in verse 5?

6. How were they alike?
7. What was one specific group this could be speaking of?
8. What did the robbers do, besides rob the strangers passing through the land?
9. Who were the naked, in verse 7?
10. Where did these marauding tribes hide?
11. What had these wicked people taken for pledge, that was forbidden by God?
12. The oppressors were making wine with what?
13. It appeared, that this type of sin was going unnoticed by _____.
14. What Light had these evil men rejected?
15. When did the murderer choose to kill?
16. Why did he choose that particular time?
17. When did the thief choose to steal?
18. What was one of the worst sins, besides murder, the evil committed?
19. How did the robbers know which house to rob?
20. What would, probably, happen to a burglar, if he was caught?
21. What was verse 18 speaking of?
22. How certain was it that the murderer would be punished of God?
23. What was meant by the womb forgetting him, in verse 20?
24. Who did the evil man torment?
25. _____ were on these wicked men.