

JOB

Chapter 24

“Why are not times of judgment kept by the Almighty, and why do those who know him never see his days? 2 Some move landmarks; they seize flocks and pasture them. 3 They drive away the donkey of the fatherless; they take the widow's ox for a pledge. 4 They thrust the poor off the road; the poor of the earth all hide themselves. 5 Behold, like wild donkeys in the desert the poor go out to their toil, seeking game; the wasteland yields food for their children. 6 They gather their fodder in the field, and they glean the vineyard of the wicked man. 7 They lie all night naked, without clothing, and have no covering in the cold. 8 They are wet with the rain of the mountains and cling to the rock for lack of shelter. 9 (There are those who snatch the fatherless child from the breast, and they take a pledge against the poor.) 10 They go about naked, without clothing; hungry, they carry the sheaves; 11 among the olive rows of the wicked they make oil; they tread the winepresses, but suffer thirst. 12 From out of the city the dying groan, and the soul of the wounded cries for help; yet God charges no one with wrong. 13 “There are those who rebel against the light, who are not acquainted with its ways, and do not stay in its paths. 14 The murderer rises before it is light, that he may kill the poor and needy, and in the night he is like a thief. 15 The eye of the adulterer also waits for the twilight, saying, ‘No eye will see me’; and he veils his face. 16 In the dark they dig through houses; by day they shut themselves up; they do not know the light. 17 For deep darkness is morning to all of them; for they are friends with the terrors of deep darkness. 18 “You say, ‘Swift are they on the face of the waters; their portion is cursed in the land; no treader turns toward their vineyards. 19 Drought and heat snatch away the snow waters; so does Sheol those who have sinned. 20 The womb forgets them; the worm finds them sweet; they are no longer remembered, so wickedness is broken like a tree.’ 21 “They wrong the barren, childless woman, and do no good to the widow. 22 Yet God prolongs the life of the mighty by his power; they rise up when they despair of life. 23 He gives them security, and they are supported, and his eyes are upon their ways. 24 They are exalted a little while, and then are gone; they are brought low and gathered up like all others; they are cut off like the heads of grain. 25 If it is not so, who will prove me a liar and show that there is nothing in what I say?”

24:1–12 Job describes the terrible injustice that often exists in the world. Robbery of both the “haves” (see v. 2) and the “have-nots” (see vv. 3–4) is equally obnoxious to him. But perhaps his suffering has enabled him to empathize with the poor, who must forage for food (v. 5) and “glean in the vineyards of the wicked” (v. 6). The scene he depicts is heart-rending: The naked shiver in the cold of night (vv. 7–8), fatherless infants are “snatched from the breast” (v. 9), field hands harvest food but go hungry (v. 10), vineyard workers make wine but suffer thirst (v. 11), groans rise from the dying and wounded (v. 12). Job cannot understand why God is silent and indifferent (vv. 1, 12) in the face of such misery, but the fact that God waits disproves the counselors’ theory of suffering. Job is no more out of God’s favor as one of the victims than the criminal in vv. 13–17 is in God’s favor because of God’s inaction. (CSB)

24:1 *His days?* When God passes judgment and the wicked are called to account. (TLSB)

24:2 *move landmarks.* A serious crime in ancient times. (CSB)

Steal land by rearranging boundaries. Cf Dt 27:17. (TLSB)

24:4 *thrust the poor off the road.* Charge does not seem as serious as the others Job mentions here, unless it describes how the wicked deprive the poor of the basic rights due them as fellow citizens. (TLSB)

hide themselves. The poor consider it much better simply to “disappear” and live anonymously, rather than to suffer the open derision and spite of the wicked. (TLSB)

24:5–12 Job inventories the misery that the poor must suffer at the hands of the rich. (TLSB)

24:5 *wild donkeys.* Like beasts, the poor must search arid and desolate places for their food, while the rich occupy the fertile areas. (TLSB)

seeking game. Without flocks or herds, the poor must hunt for meat. (TLSB)

24:6 *fodder.* Food for animals, which the poor must eat for lack of anything else. (TLSB)

glean. Harvesting grain in ancient Canaan took place in April and May (barley first, wheat a few weeks later; see 2:23). It involved the following steps: (1) cutting the ripened standing grain with hand sickles (Dt 16:9; 23:25; Jer 50:16; Joel 3:13)—usually done by men; (2) binding the grain into sheaves—usually done by women; (3) gleaning, i.e., gathering stalks of grain left behind. (CSB)

Following after the harvester to pick up leftover stalks of grain. Cf Ru 2:3. (TLSB)

24:7, 10 Job implicitly denies the accusation of Eliphaz (see 22:6). (CSB)

24:9 *snatch the fatherless child.* Taking an infant into slavery because of its mother’s debts. *take a pledge.* See note, 22:6. In a slave-owning society, even children could be collateral for a loan. (TLSB)

24:10 *hungry, they carry the sheaves.* The poor are not even allowed a portion of the grain they harvest and store for the rich. Cf Dt 25:4; Lk 15:16. (TLSB)

24:11 *olive rows.* Olive orchard. (TLSB)

24:12 *God charges no one with wrong.* Job complains that the wicked seem to get away with their crimes, while he must suffer for no apparent reason. Jeremiah voiced a similar complaint (cf Jer 12:1–4). (TLSB)

24:13–17 A description of those who cause the suffering depicted in vv. 2–12: the murderer (v. 14), the adulterer (v. 15), the robber (v. 16). Darkness is their element, the medium in which they thrive (see vv. 14–17). By contrast, God’s law is the light against which they rebel (see v. 13; see also note on 22:28). (CSB)

24:13–15 *light.* Criminals work at night. Darkness evoked images of death, Sheol, and the absence of God. Cf 3:4–7; 10:21–22. Light indicated safety, life, and truth. (TLSB)

24:16 *dig through houses.* Thieves could enter a house by creating a hole in its mud-brick wall. (TLSB)

24:17 *deep darkness is morning.* As many people rise in the morning to go about their work, so the murderer (v 14), the adulterer (v 15), and the thief (v 16) rise at nightfall and pursue their craft under the cover of darkness. (TLSB)

24:18–24 As with 26:5–14 and 27:13–23, Job appears to endorse his friends' principle of divine retribution on the wicked (e.g., 22:29–30). However, Job consistently denies that this principle applies in his own case. (TLSB)

24:18–20 Job seems to agree with the counselors here. But it is also legitimate to translate the verses as Job's call for redress against evildoers: "May their portion of the land be cursed ... may the grave snatch away ... May the womb forget them, may the worm feast on them; may evil men be no longer remembered but be broken like a tree." (CSB)

24:18 *You.* One who observes the wicked of vv 13–17 and concludes they shall soon be judged. (TLSB)

on the face of the waters. Like autumn leaves in a rushing stream, the wicked will quickly come to ruin. (TLSB)

portion. Wealth and inheritance. (TLSB)

24:19 *snow waters.* As warm weather melts snow, so shall the wicked disappear. (TLSB)

24:20 *broken like a tree.* As a tree splits in a powerful wind, so shall the wicked be broken. (TLSB)

24:21–24 By way of summary, Job says that God judges the wicked, but he does so in his own good time. Job wishes, however, that God would give the righteous the satisfaction of seeing it happen (v. 1). (CSB)

24:22 *by His power.* In His wisdom, God allows the wicked to remain for a while. (TLSB)

they rise up. The wicked appear to prosper quickly but soon become dissatisfied with success. As part of their punishment, God robs them of their zest for life. (TLSB)

24:24 *cut off like heads of grain.* A symbol of judgment. (CSB)

Separated from all others, mired in the isolation of Sheol. Cf v 19. (TLSB)

Chs 23–24 Job complains that God seemed distant and impossible to find (23:3). Yet he remains convinced—by faith and not by sight (2Co 5:7)—that God does not change His will (23:13–14). Though you suffer poverty and injustice, know that the Lord wills your good and desires your salvation. • O almighty and merciful Lord, draw near. Acquit my guilt and calm my fears. Answer me gently through Christ Jesus, my Lord. Amen. (TLSB)