

CHAPTER 24

INTRODUCTION TO JOB 24

This chapter contains the second part of Job's answer to the last discourse of Eliphaz, in which he shows that wicked men, those of the worst characters, prosper in the world, and go through it with impunity; he lays down this as a certain truth, that though no time is hid from God, yet they that are most familiar with him, and know most of him, do not see, and cannot observe, any days of his for judging and punishing wicked men in, this life, (^{<K241>}Job 24:1); and instances in men guilty of injustice, violence, oppression, cruelty, and inhumanity, to their neighbours, and yet God lays not folly to them, or charges them with sin, and punishes them for it, (^{<K242>}Job 24:2-12); and in persons that commit the most atrocious crimes in secret, such as murderers, adulterers, and thieves, (^{<K243>}Job 24:13-17); he allows that there is a curse upon their portion, and that the grave shall consume them, and they shall be remembered no more, (^{<K244>}Job 24:18-20); and because of their ill treatment of others, though they may be in safety and prosperity, and be exalted for a while, they shall be brought low and cut off by death, but generally speaking are not punished in this life, (^{<K245>}Job 24:21-24); and concludes with the greatest assurance of being in the right, and having truth on his side, (^{<K246>}Job 24:25).

Ver. 1. *Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty*, etc.] Which seems to be an inference deduced from what he had said in (^{<K247>}Job 23:14); that since all things are appointed by God, and his appointments are punctually performed by him, the times of his carrying his purposes and decrees into execution cannot be hidden from him; for, as he has determined what shall be done, he has determined the time before appointed for the doing of them; as there is a purpose for everything under the heavens, there is a time set for the execution of that purpose, which must be known unto God that has fixed it; for as all his works are known to him from the beginning, or from eternity, the times when those works should be wrought must also be known to him. The Vulgate Latin, version reduces the words to a categorical proposition, "times are not hidden from the Almighty"; either temporal things, as Saphorno interprets it, things

done in time, or the times of doing those things; no sort of time is hid from God; time respecting the world in general, its beginning, duration, and end; all seasons in it, day and night, summer and winter, seedtime and harvest, which are all fixed and settled by him; the several distinct ages and periods of time, into which it has been divided; the old and new world, the legal and Gospel dispensation, the various generations in it; the four great monarchies of the world, their rise, and duration, and end, with all other lesser kingdoms and states; time respecting the inhabitants of the world, their coming into and passing out of it in successive generations, the time of their birth, and of their death, and of adversity and prosperity, which interchangeably take place during their abode in it; and particularly the people of God, the time of their redemption by Christ, of their conversion by the grace of God, and all their times of darkness, desertion, temptation, and afflictions, and of peace, joy, and comfort; time, past and future, respecting the church of God, and the state of it, and all things relative thereunto; and the times of Israel's affliction in a land not theirs, four hundred years, and of their seventy years' captivity in Babylon, were not hidden from the Almighty, but foretold by him; the suffering times of the church under the New Testament; the ten persecutions of it by the Roman emperors; the flight and nourishment of it in the wilderness for a time, and times, and half a time; the treading down of the holy city forty two months; the witnesses prophesying: in sackcloth 1260 days; the killing of them, and their bodies lying unburied three days and a half, and then rising; the reign of antichrist forty two months, at the end of which antichristian time will be no more; the time of Christ's coming to judgment, which is a day appointed, though unknown to men and angels, and the reign of Christ on earth for a thousand years; all these times are not hidden from, but known to the Almighty, even all time, past, present, and to come, and all things that have been, are, or shall be done therein. Several Jewish commentators ^{f889} interpret these words as an expostulation or wish, "why are not times hidden?" etc. if they were, I should not wonder at it that those that knew him do not know what shall be; but he knows the times and days in which wicked men will do wickedness, why is he silent? Mr. Broughton, and others ^{f890}, render them, "why are not", or "why should not times be hidden by the Almighty?" that is, be hidden in his own breast from men, as they are; for the times and seasons it is not for man to know, which God has put in his own power, (~~4006~~ Acts 1:6); as the times of future troubles, of a man's death, and the day of judgment; it is but right and fit, on many accounts, that they should be hid by him from them; but others of later date translate

the words perhaps much better, “why are not [certain stated] times laid up”, or “reserved by the Almighty”^{f891}? that is, for punishing wicked men in this, life, as would be the case, Job suggests, if it was true what his friends had asserted, that wicked men are always punished here: and then upon this another question follows, why

do they that know him not see his days? that know him not merely by the light of nature, but as revealed in Christ; and that have not a mere knowledge of him, but a spiritual and experimental one; who know him so as to love him, believe in him, fear, serve, and worship him; and who have a greater knowledge of him than others may have, and have an intimate acquaintance and familiarity with him, are his bosom friends; and if there are fixed times for punishing the wicked in this life, how comes it to pass that these friends of God, to whom he reveals his secrets, cannot see and observe any such days and times of his as these? but, on the contrary, observe, even to the stumbling of the greatest saints, that the wicked prosper and increase in riches. Job seems to refer to what Eliphaz had said, (~~f829~~-Job 22:19); which he here tacitly denies, and proves the contrary by various instances, as follows.

Ver. 2. [*Some* remove the landmarks, etc.] Anciently set to distinguish one man’s land from another, to secure property, and preserve from encroachments; but some were so wicked as either secretly in the night to remove them, or openly to do it, having power on their side, pretending they were wrongly located; this was not only prohibited by the law of God, and pronounced an accursed thing, (~~f894~~-Deuteronomy 19:14 27:17); but was reckoned so before the law was given, being known to be such by the light of nature, as what was now, and here condemned, was before that law was in being; and so we find that this was accounted an execrable thing among the Heathens, who had a deity they called Jupiter Terminalis, who was appointed over bounds and landmarks; so Numa Pompilius appointed stones to be set as bounds to everyone’s lands, and dedicated them to Jupiter Terminalis, and ordered that those that removed them should be slain as sacrilegious persons, and they and their oxen devoted to destruction^{f892}: some render it, “they touch the landmarks”^{f893}, as if to touch them was unlawful, and therefore much more to remove them:

they violently take away flocks, and feed [thereof]; not content with a sheep or a lamb, they took away whole flocks, and that by force and violence, openly and publicly, and slew them, and fed on them; or else took

them and put them into their own grounds, or such as they had got by encroachments from others, where they fed them without any fear of men; which shows the effrontery and impudence of them.

Ver. 3. *They drive away the ass of the fatherless*, etc.] Who are left destitute of friends, and have none to take care of them, and provide for them; and who having one ass to carry their goods for them from place to place, or to ride upon, which though a creature of no great worth, yet of some usefulness, this they drove away from its pasture, or however from its right owner; and who having but one, it was the more cruel and inhuman to take it from him, see, (^{<102B>}2 Samuel 12:3,4);

they take the widow's ox for a pledge; or oxen, the singular for the plural, with which her lands were ploughed, for a single ox could be but of little service: some render it "a cow"^{f894}, by the milk of which she and her family were chiefly supported, as many poor country families are by the means of a good milch cow; and to take this, on which her livelihood depended, and retain for a pledge, was very barbarous; when the law concerning pledges took place among the Jews, in the times of Moses, which it seems was in being before with others, whatsoever was useful to persons, either to keep them warm, or by which they got their bread, were not to be taken, at least not detained for a pledge, (see ^{<102B>}Exodus 22:26,27 ^{<104B>}Deuteronomy 24:6,12,13).

Ver. 4. *They turn the needy out of the way*, etc.] Either, in a moral sense, out of the right way, the way of righteousness and truth, by their bad examples, or by their threatenings or flatteries; or, in a civil sense, out of the way of their livelihood, by taking that from them by which they got it; or, in a literal sense, obliging them to turn out of the way from them, in a supercilious and haughty manner, or causing them, through fear of them, to get out of the way, that they might not meet them, lest they should insult them, beat and abuse them, or take that little from them they had, as follows:

the poor of the earth hide themselves together; who are not only poor in purse, but poor in spirit, meek, humble, and lowly, and have not spirit and courage to stand against such oppressors, but are easily crushed by them; these through fear of them hide themselves in holes and corners in a body, in a large company together, lest they should fall into their cruel hands, and be used by them in a barbarous manner, (see ^{<103B>}Proverbs 28:28).

Ver. 5. *Behold, [as] wild asses in the desert*, etc.] The word “as” is a supplement, and may be omitted, and the words be interpreted literally of wild asses, as they are by Seforno, 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, 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^{f895} 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, (⁻⁸¹¹²Job 11:12); and for their lust and wantonness, and for their rebellion against God and his laws, and their unteachableness. Perhaps some regard may be had to the wild Arabs that were in Job’s neighbourhood, the descendants of Ishmael, called the wild man, as he is in (⁻⁰¹⁶²Genesis 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 traveller 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 labours of such industrious people, wherefore the former sense is best; and besides, there seems to be one continued account of wicked men.

Ver. 6. *They reap [everyone] his corn in the field*, etc.] Not the poor, who are obliged to reap the corn of the wicked for them without any wages, as some; but rather the wicked reap the corn of the poor; they are so insolent

and impudent, that they do not take the corn out of their barns by stealth, but while it is standing in the field; they come openly and reap it down, as if it was their own, without any fear of God or men: it is observed, that the word ^{f896} signifies a mixture of the poorer sorts of corn, which is scarce anything better than food for cattle; yet this they cut down and carry off, as forage for their horses and asses at least. Some of the ancient versions, taking it to be two words, render them, “which is not their own” ^{f897}; they go into a field that is not theirs, and reap corn that do not belong to them, that they have no right unto, and so are guilty of great injustice, and of doing injury to others:

and they gather the vintage of the wicked; gather the grapes off of the vines of wicked men, which are gathered, as the word signifies, at the latter end of the year, in autumn; and though they belong to wicked men like themselves, yet they spare them not, but seize on all that come to hand, whether the property of good men or bad men; and thus sometimes one wicked man is an instrument of punishing another: or “the wicked gather the vintage” ^{f898}; that is, of the poor; as they reap where they have not sown, they gather of that they have not planted.

Ver. 7. *They cause the naked to lodge without clothing*, etc.] That is, such as are poorly clothed, thinly arrayed, have scarce anything but rags, and yet so cruel the wicked men above described, that they take these away from the poor, and even their bed clothes, which seem chiefly designed; so that they are obliged to lodge or lie all night without anything upon them:

that [they have] no covering in the cold; neither in the daytime, nor in the night, and especially the latter; and having no house to go to, and obliged to lay themselves down upon the bare ground, had nothing to cover them from the inclemency of the weather; for even in hot countries nights are sometimes cold, and large dews fall, yea, sometimes it is a frost, (see ^{<0340}Genesis 31:40).

Ver. 8. *They are wet with the showers of the mountains*, etc.] They that are without any clothes to cover them, lying down at the bottom of a hill or mountain, where the clouds often gather, and there break, or the snow at the top of them melts through the heat of the day; and whether by the one or by the other, large streams of water run down the mountains, and the naked poor, or such who are thinly clothed, are all over wet therewith, as Nebuchadnezzar’s body was with the dew of heaven, when he was driven from men, and lived among beasts, (^{<2043}Daniel 4:33 5:21):

and embrace the rock for want of a shelter; or habitation, as the Targum; having no house to dwell in, nor any raiment to cover them, they were glad to get into the hole of a rock, in a cave or den there, and where some good men in former times were obliged to wander, (^{<S113>}Hebrews 11:38); and whither mean persons, in the time and country in which Job lived, were driven to dwell in, (see ^{<K116>}Job 30:6).

Ver. 9. *They pluck the fatherless from the breast*, etc.] Either on purpose to starve it, which must be extremely barbarous; or to sell it to be brought up a slave; or by obliging the mother to wean it before the due time, that she might be the better able to do work for them they obliged her to. Mr. Broughton renders the words, “of mischievousness they rob the fatherless”; that is, through the greatness of the mischief they do, as Ben Gersom interprets it; or through the exceeding mischievous disposition they are of; of which this is a flagrant instance; or

“they rob the fatherless of what remains for him after spoiling ^{f899},”

or devastation, through the plunder of his father’s substance now dead, which was exceeding cruel:

and take a pledge of the poor; either the poor himself, or his poor fatherless children, (see ^{<L141>}2 Kings 4:1); or what is “upon the poor” ^{f900}, as it may be rendered; that is, his raiment, which was commonly taken for a pledge; and, by a law afterwards established in Israel, was obliged to be restored before sunset, that he might have a covering to sleep in, (^{<E226>}Exodus 22:26,27); (see Gill on “^{<K216>}Job 22:6”).

Ver. 10. *They cause [him] to go naked without clothing*, etc.] Having taken his raiment from him for a pledge, or refusing to give him his wages for his work, whereby he might procure clothes to cover him, but that being withheld, is obliged to go naked, or next to it:

and they take away the sheaf [from] the hungry; the Vulgate Latin version renders it, “ears of corn”, such as the poor man plucked as he walked through a corn field, in order to rub them in his hand, and eat of, as the disciples of Christ, with which the Pharisees were offended, (^{<L101>}Luke 6:1); and which, according to a law in Israel, was allowed to be done, (^{<E225>}Deuteronomy 23:25); but now so severe were these wicked men to these poor persons, that they took away from them such ears of corn: but it is more likely that this sheaf was what the poor had gleaned, and what they had been picking up ear by ear, and had bound up into a sheaf, in order to

carry home and beat it out, and then grind the corn of it, and make a loaf of it to satisfy their hunger; but so cruel and hardhearted were these men, that they took it away from them, which they had been all, or the greatest part of the day, picking up; unless it can be thought there was a custom in Job's country, which was afterwards a law among the Jews, that if a sheaf was forgotten by the owner, and left in the field when he gathered in his corn, he was not to go back for it, and fetch it, but leave it to the poor, (^(R249)Deuteronomy 24:19); but these men would not suffer them to have it, but took it away from them; or the words may be rendered, as they are by some, "the hungry carry the sheaf"^{f901} that is, of their rich oppressive masters, who having reaped their fields for them, and bound up the corn in sheaves, carry it home for them; and yet they do not so much as give them food for their labour, or wages to purchase food to satisfy their hunger, and so dealt with them worse than the oxen were, according to the Jewish law, which were not to be muzzled when they trod out the corn, but might eat of it, (^(R234)Deuteronomy 25:4).

Ver. 11. [*Which* *make oil within their walls*, etc.] Not the poor within their own walls; as if the sense was, that they made their oil in a private manner within the walls of their houses, or in their cellars, lest it should be known and taken away from them; for such cannot be thought to have had oliveyards to make oil of; rather within the walls of their rich masters, where they were kept closely confined to their work, as if in a prison; or within the walls and fences of their oliveyards, where their olive presses stood; or best of all "within the rows"^{f902} [of] their [olive trees]", as the word signifies, where having gathered the olives, they pressed out the oil in the presses and this they did at noon, in the heat of the day, as the word^{f903} for making oil is observed by some to signify, and yet had nothing given them to quench their thirst, as follows:

[and] tread [their] winepresses, and suffer thirst; after having gathered their grapes from their vines for them, they trod them in the winepresses, and made their wine, and yet would not allow them to drink of it to allay their thirst.

Ver. 12. *Men groan from out of the city*, etc.] Because of the oppressions and injuries done to them, so that not only the poor in the country that were employed in the fields, and oliveyards, and vineyards, were used exceeding ill; but even in cities, where not only are an abundance of people, and so the outrages committed upon them, which made them groan, were

done openly and publicly, with great insolence and impudence, but where also courts of judicature were held, and yet in defiance of law and justice were those evils done, (see ^{<2016>}Ecclesiastes 3:16);

and the soul of the wounded crieth out; that is, the persons wounded with the sword, or any other instrument of vengeance, stabbed as they went along the public streets of the city, where they fell, these cried out vehemently as such persons do; so audacious, as well as barbarous, were these wicked men, that insulted and abused them:

yet God layeth not folly [to them]; it is for the sake of this observation that the whole above account is given of wicked men, as well as what follows; that though they are guilty of such atrocious crimes, such inhumanity, cruelty, and oppression in town and country, unheard of, unparalleled, iniquities, sins to be punished by a judge, yet are suffered of God to pass with impunity. By “folly” is meant sin, not lesser sins only, little, foolish, trifling things, but greater and grosser ones, such as before expressed; all sin is folly, being the breach of a law which is holy, just, and good, and exposes to its penalty and curse; and against God the lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy; and as it is harmful and prejudicial, either to the characters, bodies, or estates of men, and especially to their immortal souls; and yet God that charges his angels with folly did not charge these men with it; that is, he seemed, in the outward dealings of his providence towards them, as if he took no notice of their sins, but connived at them, or took no account of them, and did not take any methods in his providence to show their folly, and convince them of it, nor discover it to others, and make them public examples, did not punish them, but let them go on in them without control; and this Job observes, in order to prove his point, that wicked men are not always punished in this life.

Ver. 13. *They are of those that rebel against the light*, etc.] The light of nature, acting contrary to the dictates of their own consciences, in being guilty of the inhumanity, barbarity, and cruelty they were chargeable with in the above instances; or the light of the law, as the Targum; though as yet the law of the ten commandments was not in being; or however was not known to these persons; or against God himself, who is light, and in him no darkness at all, is clothed with it, and is the Father of lights unto his creatures, the Light of lights, and the Light of the world, from whom all light, natural, spiritual, and eternal, springs, (^{<6016>}1 John 1:5 ^{<5017>}James 1:17 ^{<8112>}John 8:12 9:5); which is the sense of most of the Jewish commentators

^{f904}; and every sin is a rebellion against God, and betrays the enmity of the carnal mind to him, is an act of hostility against him, and shows men to be enemies in their minds to him:

they know not the ways thereof; the ways of light, but prefer the ways of darkness to them; or the ways of God, the ways of his commandments, which he has prescribed for men, and directed them to walk in; these they know not, are wilfully ignorant of, desire not the knowledge of them, and will be at no pains to get any acquaintance with them; or they approve not of them, they are not pleasing to them, and they choose not to walk in them:

nor abide in the paths thereof; if at any time they are got into the paths of light, truth, and righteousness, or in the ways of God's commandments, and do a few good actions, they do not continue therein, but quickly go out of the way again, leave the paths of righteousness to walk in the ways of darkness, (^{¹⁰²³Proverbs 2:13). Some interpreters understand these words entirely of natural light, and of men who are like owls and bats that flee from the light, who are authors of the works of darkness, and do what they do in the dark secretly, and hate the light, and do not choose to come unto it, that their deeds may not be reproved; and so now Job enters upon the account of another set of men different from the former, who did what they did openly, in the face of the sun, and before all men; but these he is now about to describe are such who commit iniquity secretly and privately, and instances in the murderer adulterer, and thief, in (^{¹⁰³⁴Job 24:14-16).}}

Ver. 14. *The murderer rising with the light*, etc.] The light of the morning, before the sun is risen, about the time the early traveller is set out on his journey, and men go to distant markets to buy and sell goods, and the poor labourer goes forth to his work; then is the time for one that is used to commit robbery and murder to rise from his bed, or from his lurking place, in a cave or a thicket, where he has lain all night, in order to meet with the above persons: and so

killeth the poor and needy; takes away from them the little they have, whether money or provisions, and kills them because they have no more, and that they may not be evidence against him; it may be meant of the poor saints and people of God, whom the wicked slay out of hatred to them:

and in the night is as a thief; kills privately, secretly, at an unawares, as the thief does his work; or the "as" here is not a note of similitude or likeness,

but of reality and truth; and so Mr. Broughton renders the words, “and in the night he will be as a thief”; in the morning he is a robber on the highway, and a murderer; all the day he is in his lurking place, in some haunt or another, sleeping or carousing; and when the night comes on, then he acts the part of a thief; in the morning he not only robs, but murders, that he may not be detected; at night he only steals, and not kills, because men are asleep, and see him not.

Ver. 15. *The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight*, etc.] Not of the morning, which would not give him time enough to satiate his lust, but of the evening, that he may have the whole night before him to gratify his impure desires, and that these may be indulged in the most private and secret manner; and having fixed the time in the evening with his adulteress, he waits with impatience, and earnestly wishes and longs for its coming, and diligently looks out for the close of day, and takes the first opportunity of the darkness of the evening to set out on his adventure, (see ^{<1007>}Proverbs 7:7-9); and the “eye” is particularly observed, not only because that is the instrument by which the twilight is discerned, and is industriously employed in looking out for it, but is full of adultery, as the Apostle Peter expresses it, (^{<6014>}2 Peter 2:14); it is what is the inlet to this sin, the leader on to it, the caterer for it, and the nourisher, and cherisher of it, (see ^{<830>}Job 30:1);

saying, no eye shall see me; no eye of man, which such an one is careful to guard against; and especially the eye of the husband of the adulteress, whose raging jealousy will not spare the adulterer, but take revenge on him by an immediate dispatch of him. And few care to have it known by any that they are guilty of this sin, because it brings dishonour and reproach upon them, which cannot be wiped off: the fact of Absalom going in to his father’s concubines in the sight of all Israel, (^{<1061>}2 Samuel 16:21,22), and lying with them in the face of the sun, is the most notorious instance of this kind to be read; usually both sexes choose the utmost secrecy. Potiphar’s wife took the opportunity to tempt Joseph when none of the men of the house were within, (^{<0350>}Genesis 35:10,11); and when Amnon intended to force his sister, he ordered all the men to be had out of the room, (^{<1039>}2 Samuel 13:9): and moreover, the adulterer foolishly fancies that God sees him not, or at least is not concerned about that; though there is no darkness where such workers of iniquity can hide themselves from his all seeing eye, the darkness and the light are both alike to him. These men are like the ostrich, which thrusting its head into a thicket, as Tertullian¹⁹⁰⁵ observes,

fancies it is not seen; so children cover their faces, and, because they see none, think that nobody sees them; and as weak and childish a part do such act, who imagine that their evil deeds, done in the dark, are not seen by him, before whom every creature is made manifest, and all things are naked and open:

and disguiseth [his] face; puts a mask upon it, that he may not be known by any he meets, when upon his amorous adventure, as harlots used to cover themselves with a vail, (^{<0834>}Genesis 38:14,15).

Ver. 16. *In the dark they dig through houses, [which] they had marked for themselves in the daytime*, etc.] Which some understand of adulterers last mentioned, who, having observed where beautiful women dwell, mark their houses, and the way to them, and the best way into them, and in the dark get in at windows, or by breaking open doors get to the persons they lust after; but as such steps would be neither safe nor prudent, so they are not necessary; such sort of persons get admittance in an easier way, either by bribing servants, or by a previous agreement with the adulteress herself: rather this is to be understood of the thief and his companions, before spoken of; or designs another sort of thieves, such as are guilty of burglary, housebreakers, who in the daytime go about and observe such houses as are full of money, plate, and rich goods, (see ^{<0835>}Job 3:15); and take diligent notice of the way to them, and which is the best and easiest part to get into them, and, perhaps, set on them a private mark that they may know them; these they break up, the walls, or doors, or windows, and get in at them, and rob, and plunder, and carry off all they can; the same sins were committed, and the same methods of committing them were used, formerly as now; there was a law in Israel concerning housebreaking, (^{<0212>}Exodus 22:2); and our Lord alludes to it, (^{<0243>}Matthew 24:43,44). Some render the words, “they seal up” or “shut up themselves in the day”^{f906}; in their caves, and dens, and lurking places, and do not appear, and scarce ever see the light, and therefore it follows:

they know not the light; it is seldom or ever seen by them, or they do not approve it, like it, and love it, being not for their purpose; while it is light they can do nothing, that manifestly discovers and betrays them, and therefore they hate it; and in a figurative sense they know not, or do not approve of the light of nature, which checks and controls such evil actions, and accuses them of them; nor the light of God’s word, or holy law, which forbids them, and therefore they despise it, and cast it away from them, and

will not be subject to it; nor God himself, who is light, and against whom their carnal minds are enmity; and whatever knowledge they have of him, or profess to have, in works they deny him, and live without him, as atheists in the world.

Ver. 17. *For the morning [is] to them even as the shadow of death*, etc.] It is as disagreeable, and as hateful, and as terrible to them as the grossest and thickest darkness can be to others. The word **wđj y** is to be rendered either “alike” or “altogether”, and not “even”, as in our version: “the morning is to them equally” or “together”^{f907}; that is, to the murderer, robber, thief, adulterer, and housebreaker, “as the shadow of death”; alike disagreeable to them all; or “the shadow of death is to them together” or “alike [as the] morning”; what the morning is to others, exceeding pleasant and delightful, that to them is the shadow of death, or the darkest night; they love darkness rather than light:

if [one] know [them, they are in] the terrors of the shadow of death; they are frightened unto death, they are in as great terror as a man is to whom death is the king of terrors; and who is sensible of the near approach of it, the plain and manifest symptoms of it being upon him: this is the case of the murderer, adulterer, and thief, when they are caught in the fact; or are known by such who are capable of giving notice of them, detecting them, and bearing witness against them: or “he”, each and everyone of these, “knows the terrors of the shadow of death”^{f908}; the darkest night, which strikes terrors into others, is known by them, is delighted in by them, is familiar with them, and friendly to them, and is as pleasing as the brightest day to others.

Ver. 18. *He [is] swift as the waters*, etc.] Or “upon the face of the waters”^{f909}; which some interpret of another set and sort of wicked men, guilty of like crimes, not on land, but upon the mighty waters; pirates, such that commit robberies upon the high seas; who generally choose the swiftest vessels to run from place to place for their prey, and to carry off their booty when pursued; whose manner of life is detestable to other persons; and especially they are cursed by those on land, who suffer by robbing the ships of their goods they send abroad; but these men best like such a manner of life, and prefer it to any thing by land, to agriculture or cultivation of vineyards, which they have no regard unto, as is supposed to be intimated by the following clauses; but it is greatly to be questioned whether there were any such persons, or that such practices obtained so

early as the time of Job. Schultens thinks Sodomites are meant, who are most profuse to lust, and flow in it like water, plough the accursed field, by going after strange flesh, and have no regard to lawful marriage, or honest wives, comparable to vines and vineyards; but I should rather think those guilty of the sin of Onan are meant, who have no regard to the propagation of posterity. Others, as Ben Gersom are of opinion that this refers to the above persons, murderers, adulterers, and thieves, (^{<18244>}Job 24:14-16); who, being conscious of their crimes and due deserts, and in danger of being taken up, and brought to just punishment, flee to the sea with all the haste they can, take shipping, and go abroad into foreign parts; where they dwell in desolate and uncultivated places of the earth, which are cursed, or nigh unto cursing, and never more see pleasant fields, gardens, orchards, and vineyards: though others suppose that these words describe the temper and disposition of such wicked persons, who are unstable as water, carried about as any light thing upon the water with every wind of temptation, run swiftly into evil, and make haste to commit sin; though it seems best of all to interpret the words as respecting the state of wicked men at death, who then pass away swiftly and suddenly as gliding waters, and are “lighter” or swifter “than the waters”, as Mr. Broughton renders the words:

their portion is cursed in the earth; that part and portion of the good things of this world they have is with a curse; their very blessings are cursed, and what they leave behind has a curse entailed on it, and in process of time is blasted, and comes to nothing; for, the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, (^{<2183>}Proverbs 3:33);

he beholdeth not the way of the vineyards; as in their lifetime they had no regard to the way of good and righteous men, of whom Jarchi in a mystical sense, interprets the vineyards; so at death they are taken away from all their worldly enjoyments they set their hearts upon; their places know them no more, and they no more see their fields, and vineyards, and oliveyards, and take no more walks unto them nor in them.

Ver. 19. *Drought and heat consume the snow waters*, etc.] Melt the snow into water, and dry up that, which is done easily, quickly, and suddenly:

[so doth] the grave [those which] have sinned; all have sinned, but some are more notorious sinners than others, as those here meant; and all die and are laid in the grave, and are consumed; hence the grave is called the pit of corruption and destruction, because bodies are corrupted and destroyed in it, and which is the case of all, both good and bad men; but the metaphor

here used to express it by, of the consumption of snow water by drought and heat, denotes either that the death of these persons is sudden and violent, and in such a manner are brought to the grave, consumed there; that they die a sudden death, and before their time, and do not live out half the days, which, according to the course of nature, they might have lived, or it was expected by them and others they would; whereas they are “snatched away”, as the word signifies, as suddenly and violently as snow waters are by the drought and heat; or else that their death is quick, quiet, and easy, as snow is quickly dissolved, and the water as soon and as easily dried up by the drought and heat; they do not lie long under torturing diseases, but are at once taken away, and scarce feel any pain; they die in their full strength, wholly at ease and quiet; which sense well answers Job’s scope and design, (see ^{<8212>}Job 21:23 ^{<9704>}Psalms 73:4). Some render the words, “in the drought and heat they rob, and in the snow waters”, ^{f910}; that is, they rob at all times and seasons of the year, summer and winter; and this is their constant trade and employ; they are always at it, let the weather be what it will: and “they sin unto the grave”, or “hell” ^{f911}; they continue in their wicked course of life as long as they live, until they are brought to the grave; they live and die in sin.

Ver. 20. *The womb shall forget him*, etc.] His mother that bore him; or his wife, by whom he had many children; or his friend, as Gersom, who had a tender and affectionate respect for him; these all, and each of them, either because of his wicked life and infamous death, care not to speak of him, but bury him in oblivion; or because of his quiet and easy death, are not distressed with it, but soon forget him; unless this is to be understood of the womb of the earth, in which being buried, he lies forgotten, to which the next clause agrees; though some interpret it of God himself the word having the signification of mercy ^{f912}; who, though mercy itself, is rich and abundant in it, yet has no mercy for, nor shows any favour to, such men; but they lie in the grave among those whom he remembers no more in a way of grace and favour, (^{<9815>}Psalms 85:5);

the worm shall feed sweetly on him; for being brought to the grave at once, without any wasting distemper, is a fine repast for worms, his breasts being full of milk, and his bones moistened with marrow, and full of flesh; or “the worm [is] sweet unto him” ^{f913}; he feels no pain by its feeding on him, and so the sense is just the same with that expression, “the clods of the valley shall be sweet unto him”, (^{<8213>}Job 21:33);

he shall be no more remembered; with any mark of honour and respect; his memory shall rot with him, while the righteous are had in everlasting remembrance; or rather dying a common death, and not made a public example of:

and wickedness shall be broken as a tree; that is, wicked men, who are wickedness itself, extremely wicked, and are like to a tree, sometimes flourishing in external prosperity, having an affluence of the things of this world, and always like barren and unfruitful trees, with respect to grace and good works; these, when the axe of death is laid to the root of them, they are cut down, and their substance comes to nothing, and their families are destroyed, and so they become like trees struck with thunder and lightning, and broken into ten thousand shivers; or as the trees in Egypt were broken to pieces by the plague of hail, (⁽¹⁰²⁵⁾Exodus 9:25).

Ver. 21. *He evil entreateth the barren, [that] beareth not*, etc.] Here Job returns, to give some further account of the sins of some wicked men, who prosper in this world, and go through it with impunity; and speaks of such that use their wives ill because they are barren, upbraid them with it, and are churlish to them on account of it; or use them ill that they may be barren, and bear no children, having no pleasure in them, as not in vineyards, before, (⁽⁸⁹¹⁸⁾Job 24:18); and some interpret this of deflowering virgins, who never bore children, and of using methods to make them abortive, when with child; the word we translate “evil entreateth” sometimes signifies joining to, or being a companion of others, as in (⁽¹¹³³⁾Proverbs 13:20); hence various senses are given; some, he joins himself to a barren woman, that he may have no children, being not desirous of any; others, he, joins himself to, and is a companion of harlots, who are commonly barren: and like the prodigal, spends his substance among them. Some interpreters take this verse and (⁽¹³²²⁾Job 24:22); as expressive of the punishment of wicked men: so Mr. Broughton renders the words, “he adjoineth the barren”^{f914}, and gives the sense of them thus; God sends after him a barren wife, that he shall have no help by children; but, though a numerous offspring has been reckoned an outward happiness, and not to have any an infelicity, yet it has been the case of many good men and women to be childless; wherefore love and hatred are not known hereby: besides, such a sense is contrary to the scope and design of Job, which is to prove that wicked men often go unpunished in this life; wherefore, rather the meaning is, that a wicked man uses ill such, who having not only lost their husbands, but having been barren, and so childless, have none to take

their part, and to protect and defend them from the abuses of such men; the Targum renders the word, “he breaketh”, and so some understand it ^{f915}; he breaketh the barren, tears them to pieces, ruins and destroys them, as to their outward substance, because they have no children to help them; with which agrees what follows,

and doth not good to the widow; does not make her glad and cheerful, as Job did, who made the widow’s heart to sing for joy, (~~Job~~ Job 29:13); does not relieve and assist her when in distress, either by counsel and advice, or by administering to her necessities; but, on the contrary, afflicts and oppresses her; takes her ox, or her raiment, for a pledge, and plunders her house, and devours the substance of it; for more is intended than is expressed.

Ver. 22. *He draweth also the mighty with his power*, etc.] Such a wicked man not only maltreats the weak, the helpless, and the defenceless, but even attacks the mighty and powerful; such as are in great power and authority, and abound in wealth and riches, only somewhat inferior in both to himself: wherefore, by his superior force, he draws them to be of his party, to join with him in acts of rapine and violence, oppression and cruelty; or he draws them by power or policy, or by both, as the wicked man does the poor with his net, (~~Psal~~ Psalm 10:9); and so makes a prey of him and his substance. Some understand this of the punishment of wicked men, and interpret it, as Jarchi does, of God’s drawing him to punishment; God sometimes does indeed draw and hurl the mighty from their seats; though they are set in high, yet in slippery places, and are brought down to destruction in a moment; and he will draw them all to his judgment seat hereafter, whether they will or not, and send them into everlasting punishment; but the former sense is best:

he riseth up, and no [man] is sure of life; he rises up in the morning; either from his bed, or from his lurking place, where he was all night with a murdering intention, and no man he meets with is safe, but in the utmost danger of his life, (~~Job~~ Job 24:14); or, he rises in the world to great power and dignity, and increases in wealth and riches, which he abuses to the hurt of others; so that they flee from him and hide themselves, not caring to trust their life with him, (~~Prov~~ Proverbs 28:28); or he riseth up against a man in an hostile way, and against whomsoever he does, they are in the utmost jeopardy, and cannot be secure of their lives; though this also is by some interpreted as the punishment of a wicked man, who, when he rises in the

morning, “trusteth not his own life”^{f916}, as the words may be rendered, and as they are in the margin of our Bibles; but his life is in suspense, being surrounded with a thousand dangers, and has no assurance of it, and is in continual fear, and often fears where no fear is; (see ~~1536~~ Deuteronomy 28:66); or, if a man rises up against him, the wicked tyrant and cruel oppressor, he the tyrant is not sure of his life but may be slain by him that rises up against him; but the former sense is best.

Ver. 23. [*Though*] *it be given him [to be] in safety*, etc.] Or “he gives him”^{f917}, that is, it is God gives the wicked man to be in safety, notwithstanding all his wickedness; for Job, having described the wicked man, now represents him as in the greatest prosperity: safety is of God in every respect, not only the safety of good men, both in a way of providence and in a way of grace, but even of bad men; those are often preserved from the incursions and depredations of others, and their goods are kept, and they possess them in peace, and they dwell secure and confidently without care. The Vulgate Latin version is widely different,

“God gives him place of repentance, and he abuses it to pride;”

though the Targum somewhat agrees with it,

“he gives to him repentance, that he may trust, or be confident and be supported:”

so God gave space to repent to the old world; to whose case some Jewish writers apply the context, (see ~~11075~~ Genesis 6:3 ~~1275~~ Luke 17:26,27);

whereon he resteth; being in prosperity and safety, he trusts to it, and depends upon it it will ever be the case; he has much goods laid up for many years, and therefore sings “requiem” to his soul, saying, “take thine ease”; tomorrow will be as this day, and much more abundant; things will always be as they are, or better:

yet his eyes [are] upon their ways; or, “and his eyes”^{f918}, that is, the eyes of God, which are upon all men, good and bad, and upon all their ways and works; these are upon the wicked man and all his courses; not to punish him now for his sins; for, though he sees all his wicked actions, not one escapes his notice, yet he lays not folly to him, nor charges him with it, nor inflicts punishment on him for it; nay, his eyes are upon him to prosper and succeed him in all he does; which is the usual sense of the phrase, unless where there is an explanation, or anything said to show the contrary; (see

^{<6112>}Deuteronomy 11:12). Some give a different sense of the words, as that such that fear the wicked man give him gifts, that they may be in safety, in which they trust; or he gives them his hand, or his word, or both, that they shall be, on which they rely; but his eyes are upon them, watching their ways and works, to take every opportunity and advantage against them; but the former is best.

Ver. 24. *They are exalted for a little while*, etc.] To seats of honour, to places of profit and trust, to great wealth and riches, to be highly esteemed among men, and to have a large affluence of the good things of life; (see ^{<3815>}Malachi 3:15); though this exaltation, dignity, and glory, wealth and riches, last but for a little time, this life at longest being but short, like a vapour that appears, and soon vanishes away; and then all a man's honours and glory, riches and substance, are at an end, who is soon cut down as the grass, and withers as the green herb, (^{<4870>}Psalms 37:2); but as this pretty much falls in with the sentiment of Zophar, or seems to do so, (^{<4815>}Job 20:5); rather this phrase, "for a little while", may be joined with what follows, "a little while, and they are gone";

but are gone; out of the world, to their own place, and death puts an end to all their prosperity, to all their outward enjoyments, which yet they retain till death: or "they are not", ^{f919}; in the land of the living, in their houses and shops, and places of trade and commerce; they are no more about their business, and in their callings of life, nor in the possession of their worldly estates; the places which knew them know them no more; and this comes to pass in a very little time; their honour is short lived, and their earthly portion is not forever:

and brought low; not diminished in their substance in life, nor lessened in their honour and grandeur, nor are brought into poverty and disgrace; but are brought at last to death, and laid low in the grave, and are fed upon by worms, and reduced to rottenness and dust:

they are taken out of the way, as all [others]; out of the world, by death, and out of the way of others; who come in their room, and were hoping for their death, and waiting for their posts of honour, and places of profit, or for their worldly estates; and out of the way of doing more mischief, and especially to good men; or they are "closed" or "shut up", ^{f920}; that is, in the grave, where they lie imprisoned until the resurrection morn, and out of which prison none can release themselves; nor will they be released, until Christ, who has the keys of the grave, unlocks it, and sets the prisoners

free; but then all this is no other than what befalls the rest of mankind; all die, and must die, and all are brought to the grave, and laid in that, and shut up in it, which is the house appointed for all living:

and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn; when they are fully ripe at harvest time; it being usual in some places, as I have somewhere read, when they gather their corn, only to cut off the ears of corn at the top, which is very easily and quickly done; and so this may denote the quiet and easy death of wicked men, and when they are come to a full age, and are like a shock of corn in its season, (~~Job~~ Job 5:26).

Ver. 25. *And if [it be] not [so] now*, etc.] If this is not the case of men of such wicked lives as above described, do not prosper in the world, and increase in riches, and do not pass through the world with impunity, and die quietly, in the full possession of their honour and wealth:

who will make me a liar? where is the man? let him stand forth and appear, and disprove what has been said, and make out the doctrine delivered to be false doctrine, and a lie; for no lie is of the truth:

and make my speech nothing worth; vain, useless, and unprofitable; truth is valuable, like gold, silver and precious stones; but error is as wood, hay, and stubble, and nothing worth, yea, to be detested and rejected: or let him make what I have said to stand “for nothing”^{f921}; let him show, if he can, that it is impertinent, and not to the purpose, that it does not prove the point for which it is brought: thus Job was willing to have what he had said tried by every method that could be made use of, that it might appear whether what he had said was true or false, worthy to be regarded, or worthless; and he here bids defiance to his friends, or to any other, and triumphs over them, as having gained his point; and, as it appears by the sequel, he had, at least in a great measure, and however with respect to this matter, that good men are afflicted in this life, and wicked men prosper; of which there are many instances.