

Mark 12:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled.

Analysis

Again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones—The owner's patience continues despite escalating violence. Lithoboleō (λιθοβολέω, to stone) was the covenant penalty for blasphemy and rebellion (Leviticus 24:16), ironically now inflicted on God's own messengers. **Wounded him in the head** (κεφαλαιόω, kephalaioō)—a grievous, potentially fatal injury. **Shamefully handled** (ἀτιμάζω, atimazō)—dishonored, treated with contempt.

The progression intensifies: beating becomes stoning, injury becomes head wounds, mere rejection becomes public shaming. Yet the owner keeps sending servants, revealing God's incredible patience with covenant-breaking Israel. Each rejected prophet hardens the tenants further, making their guilt inexcusable.

Historical Context

Stoning was Israel's prescribed method for executing covenant breakers (Deuteronomy 17:5). The irony is profound: those charged with guarding God's covenant use covenant penalties against God's prophets. Historical examples include Zechariah son of Jehoiada, stoned in the temple court by order of King Joash (2 Chronicles 24:21), and later tradition records the stoning of Jeremiah in Egypt.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's continued sending of messengers despite repeated rejection reveal both His patience and the tenants' increasing culpability?
2. In what ways does religious authority become most dangerous when it violently defends itself against prophetic truth?
3. What progression of resistance do you see in your own life when confronted with unwelcome biblical truth?

Interlinear Text

καὶ πάλιν ἀπέστειλαν πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἄλλον δοῦλον.
And again he sent unto them another servant
G2532 G3825 G649 G4314 G846 G243 G1401

κάκεῖνον λιθοβολήσαντες ἐκεφαλαίωσαν καὶ
and at him they cast stones and wounded him in the head And
G2548 G3036 G2775 G2532

ἀπέστειλαν ἡτίμωμένον
he sent shamefully handled
G649 G821

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