

Deuteronomy 20:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it.

Analysis

When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it—Even in warfare, Israel must offer shalom (שָׁלוֹם, peace, wholeness) first. This requirement distinguished Israel from aggressive conquerors—they fought defensively or under divine mandate, not for imperial expansion. **Proclaim** (קָרָא, qara, 'call out, summon') suggests public, formal offer—opportunity for negotiation, not deceptive ambush.

Jesus commanded: **Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you** (Matthew 5:44). Paul echoes: **If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men** (Romans 12:18). Yet Jesus also declared: **I came not to send peace, but a sword** (Matthew 10:34)—the gospel divides (Luke 12:51-53). We offer peace (the gospel), but if rejected, judgment follows. God's warfare ethic: seek peace first, fight only when necessary.

Historical Context

Ancient warfare often began with surprise attacks or sieges without warning. God's requirement to offer peace first demonstrated Israel's moral superiority and gave enemies opportunity to submit peacefully (like Rahab, Joshua 2:9-14). Failure to offer peace risked fighting when surrender was possible.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How do you 'proclaim peace' (offer the gospel) before engaging in spiritual warfare (confrontation, correction)?
2. What does Jesus's paradox ('I came not to send peace, but a sword') teach about gospel proclamation's divisive necessity?
3. In what relationships are you called to 'seek peace' while remaining prepared to 'fight' if peace is rejected?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	תִּקְרַב	אֶל	עַד יְרֵמָה	לְהִלָּחֵם	עַל יְהוָה
H3588	When thou comest nigh	H413	unto a city	to fight	H5921
	H7126		H5892	H3898	
	וְקָרַב אֶת־	לְשָׁלוֹם:	אֶל יְהוָה		
	against it then proclaim	H413	peace		
	H7121		H7965		

Additional Cross-References

Ephesians 2:17 (Peace): And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.