

Deuteronomy 20:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee.

Analysis

And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee—Cities accepting peace become mas (מַס, 'forced labor, tribute')—subordinate but not exterminated. This merciful alternative to total war allowed survival in exchange for service. Gibeon secured such a treaty through deception (Joshua 9:3-27), becoming woodcutters and water-carriers.

This foreshadows gospel dynamics: rebels against the King may surrender and live, entering service rather than destruction. **The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life** (Romans 6:23). Yet surrender means slavery's exchange: **Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness** (Romans 6:18). We escape death-sentence by becoming Christ's bondservants—**whose service is perfect freedom** (Book of Common Prayer). Tribute depicts redeemed humanity serving the King who conquered us.

Historical Context

Tributary relationships were common in ancient Near Eastern geopolitics—conquered cities paid taxes and provided labor while maintaining local governance. Israel's system was comparatively merciful (survival with service) versus typical ancient conquest (extermination or slavery).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does becoming Christ's 'tributary' (servant after surrender) provide freedom rather than oppression?
2. What does the choice (destruction or service) reveal about the gospel's demand for total allegiance?
3. In what areas are you offering Christ 'tribute' (token service) rather than wholehearted submission?

Interlinear Text

וְהָיָה	אִם	שָׁלֹוֹם	תַּעֲנֶנּוּ	וּפָתַחְתָּהּ	לָךְ
H1961	H518	of peace	And it shall be if it make thee answer	and open	H0
		H7965	H6030	H6605	

וְהָיָה	כָּל	הָעָם	הַנִּמְצָא	בָּהּ
H1961	H3605	unto thee then it shall be that all the people	that is found	H0
		H5971	H4672	

וְהָיָה	לָךְ	לְמִס	וְעַבְדוּךָ:
H1961	H0	therein shall be tributaries	unto thee and they shall serve
		H4522	H5647