

2 Chronicles Chapter 17

Verses 17:1 – 21:3: The reign of Jehoshaphat (ca. 873-848 B.C.; compare 1 Kings 15:24; 22:1-50).

Verses 1-2: Jehoshaphat prepared the nation militarily for any aggression, particularly from the northern kingdom of Israel.

2 Chronicles 17:1 "And Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead, and strengthened himself against Israel."

In the “stead” of Asa his father.

"And strengthened himself against Israel": The ten tribes, by fortifying his cities, building castles, raising and keeping a large standing army. As the latter part of this chapter shows, and the next verse.

Jehoshaphat (whom Jehovah judges), was a powerful king who took over as king when he was 35 years old. He was the son of Asa and Azubah. He was also spoken of as Josaphat. It appears he strengthened his people against possible attack from Israel.

Verses 2-5: Asa’s early spiritual sensitivity had a strong formative effect upon Jehoshaphat’s character (compare 20:32). For “Baalim” (see the note on Judges 2:11-15).

2 Chronicles 17:2 "And he placed forces in all the fenced cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim, which Asa his father had taken."

A considerable number of soldiers, to defend them should they be attacked.

"And set garrisons in the land of Judah": On the frontiers and borders of it, to protect it.

"And in the cities of Ephraim": Soldiers to keep garrison there.

"Which Asa his father had taken (see 2 Chronicles 15:8).

This appears that he sent troops and fortifications to these cities to ward off any attack from Israel. In the last lesson, we saw that Asa had begun to do these things at the latter part of his reign.

Verses 3-5: Because “Jehoshaphat ... walked in his commandments” as King “David had, “the LORD stablished the kingdom in his hand”. This verse reflects an important theme (in 2 Chronicles): God blesses obedience and punishes the disobedient.

Verses 3-9: Jehoshaphat made three strategic moves, spiritually speaking:

- (1) He obeyed the Lord (17:3-6);
- (2) He removed false worship from the land (17:6); and
- (3) He sent out teachers who taught the people the law of the Lord (17:7-9).

2 Chronicles 17:3 "And the LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim;"

“Baalim”: This is a general term used for idols (compare Judges 2:11-13).

David was not the father of Jehoshaphat. He was his ancestor. In fact, he was his great-great-great-grandson. He was a man after God's own heart. David had loved the LORD with all his heart, and that was what was said of Jehoshaphat here. Asa, his father, had loved the LORD as well. Israel had some very wicked kings, such as Ahab, during the reign of Jehoshaphat over Judah. Baalim was one of the false gods worshipped in Israel.

2 Chronicles 17:4 "But sought to the [LORD] God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel."

Prayed to him, worshipped and served him.

"And walked in his commandments": Observed and kept them, moral, ceremonial, and judicial.

"And not after the doings of Israel": Who worshipped the golden calves at Dan and Bethel.

This of course, is speaking of Asa, who destroyed the idols in Judah.

2 Chronicles 17:5 "Therefore the LORD stablished the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents; and he had riches and honor in abundance."

Piety is the best prop of government. The throne is best supported and established by truth, righteousness, and mercy. By the exercise of these Jehoshaphat was settled in his kingdom, and had a place in the hearts of his people.

"And all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents": Being well affected to him, as well as it was usual so to do at a prince's accession to the throne (see 1 Sam. 10:27).

"And he had riches and honor in abundance": Through the presents his subjects brought him, and the respect they showed him.

The gifts were not taxes. These were given, because the people loved and appreciated what Jehoshaphat stood for. When a king served the LORD with all his heart, the people were blessed as well. We see that God had poured an abundant blessing upon Jehoshaphat.

Verses 6-9: Jehoshaphat's zeal for the Lord saw to the appointment of officials and Levites who traveled throughout his kingdom teaching "the law of the Lord" in accordance with the prescription of the Mosaic legislation (Deut. 17:18-20; compare 2 Sam. 23:3-4).

2 Chronicles 17:6 "And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the LORD: moreover he took away the high places and groves out of Judah."

Like his father, Jehoshaphat attempted to remove "the high places and groves out of Judah". As the chronicler later explains, the king was not entirely successful (20:33).

Asa had begun this work when he was king, but it appears that Jehoshaphat continued the cleansing of the land of all false worship.

2 Chronicles 17:7 "Also in the third year of his reign he sent to his princes, [even] to Ben-hail, and to Obadiah, and to Zechariah, and to Nethaneel, and to Michaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah."

Jehoshaphat sent out his teachers with the Levites and priests because God had given them the task to teach God's law (Lev. 10:10). If we expect our teaching to bear fruit, it must be firmly rooted in the Word of God (John 7:16; 1 Tim. 4:6; 2 Tim. 1:13; 3:16).

This is a message to the princes of each of the areas, to see that their people were taught the book of the law. They had drifted away from God's teachings, much as our land has today. Notice what would get them back where they needed to be. They must learn God's Word. We must return to our Bible also, if we are to be a great nation again.

2 Chronicles 17:8 "And with them [he sent] Levites, [even] Shemaiah, and Nethaniah, and Zebadiah, and Asahel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehonathan, and Adonijah, and Tobijah, and Tobadonijah, Levites; and with them Elishama and Jehoram, priests."

With the five princes he sent nine Levites.

"Even Shemaiah, and Nethaniah, and Zebadiah, and Asahel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehonathan, and Adonijah, and Tobijah, and Tobadonijah, Levites": Of whom we nowhere else read. No doubt they were principal persons, and fit for the work they were sent.

"And with them Elishama and Jehoram, priests": Whose lips were to keep knowledge, and at whose mouth the law was to be sought (Mal. 2:7).

The Levites were the chosen ones to bring the people into a spiritual awareness of God and His ways. They were entrusted with the spiritual growth of the people of the land.

2 Chronicles 17:9 "And they taught in Judah, and [had] the book of the law of the LORD with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people."

The people their duty to God and man.

"And had the book of the law of the Lord with them": As the rule of their instruction, and the people's obedience. Out of this they taught them, and by it confirmed what they taught, and enforced it with the divine authority.

"And went about throughout all the cities of Judah": Not only their own cities, the Levitical ones, but all others.

"And taught the people": The law of the Lord, the fear and worship of God.

I have said this numerous times, but must say it again here. These people of Judah or even our people today, cannot do the will of God until we know what that will is. We cannot know His will, until we know His Word. We must study the Bible, as they had to study the law to know God.

Verses 10-19: The account of Jehoshaphat's growing power and prosperity is not recorded by the author of Kings.

Verses 10-11: Jehoshaphat's spiritual strategy accomplished its intended purpose, i.e., invoking God's blessing and protection, much like it did with Abijah (13:2-20), and Asa (14:9-15). It should be noted that the Jews needed animals for extensive sacrificial uses, as much as for food and clothing.

2 Chronicles 17:10 "And the fear of the LORD fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that [were] round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat."

Upon the ten tribes, and on foreign nations about them, as Moabites, Edomites, Syrians, Egyptians, Arabs, and Philistines. This fear, as it came from the Lord, so might be raised and increased by observing, that religion was revived in them. For they might perceive, by former observations made, that the more religious these people were, the more prosperous and formidable they were.

"So that they made no war against Jehoshaphat": To interrupt him in the work of reformation he was so intent upon.

It is thrilling to me to see that even the worldly people around them feared the power of their God. The worldly people even knew that the knowing of God's law and doing it would bring tremendous blessings to Judah.

2 Chronicles 17:11 "Also [some] of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and tribute silver; and the Arabians brought him flocks, seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred he goats."

Perhaps those of Gerar, and the parts adjacent, Asa took and spoiled, and made tributary (2 Chron. 14:14).

"And the Arabians brought him flocks, seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred he goats": With which their country abounded. And these might be the Scenite Arabs, who fearing lest Jehoshaphat should fall upon them, and take away their flocks as his father had done (2 Chron. 14:15). They brought these presents to him.

These Philistines were probably paying tribute. They would not dare come against Jehoshaphat's God. The Arabians were the same way. They did not necessarily fear Jehoshaphat. They feared Jehoshaphat's God.

Verses 12-13: These verses indicate the massive wealth that developed under divine blessing (compare 18:1), as well as formidable military power (verses 14-19).

2 Chronicles 17:12 "And Jehoshaphat waxed great exceedingly; and he built in Judah castles, and cities of store."

In wealth and riches, power and authority, in his forces and fortifications.

"And he built in Judah castles, and cities of stores": Castles for the defense of his kingdom, and store cities to lay up corn, and wine, and all provisions. In case of an invasion, or against a time of war.

With this type of tribute, it would not take long for the country of Judah to become wealthy. The castles and the cities of store come with great abundance.

2 Chronicles 17:13 "And he had much business in the cities of Judah: and the men of war, mighty men of valor, [were] in Jerusalem."

Partly in fortifying them, and partly in reforming the inhabitants of them.

"And the men of war, mighty men of valor, were in Jerusalem": Or by or near unto it, so the particle is rendered (Joshua 5:13). They encamped in places adjacent to it. For such a number of men as follows, even 1,160,000, could never be contained in Jerusalem, but must be disposed of in the territories of it. Nor did they wait on the king together; but in course (see 2 Chron. 17:19).

By which it appears there is no need to suppose any mistake of the transcriber, in any or all of the following sums, as has been suggested.

There was plenty of work for everyone to do with all of the building that was going on. His great strength of his military was to guard Jerusalem, the city of God.

2 Chronicles 17:14 "And these [are] the numbers of them according to the house of their fathers: Of Judah, the captains of thousands; Adnah the chief, and with him mighty men of valor three hundred thousand."

Both of the tribe of Judah and of Benjamin. And first of Judah, the captains of thousands. Some had 1000 men under them, and some one hundred.

"Adnah the chief": He was the principal commander or general of them.

"And with him mighty men of valor, three hundred thousand": Such a number was under his command.

This is speaking of 300,000 standing men ready for war. This first captain of thousands was Adnah. He seemed to be like a general in our army. He was the main officer of authority of the troops.

2 Chronicles 17:15 "And next to him [was] Jehohanan the captain, and with him two hundred and fourscore thousand."

Being of the same rank as to office, but having a lesser number of men under him. And it may respect not any kind of subordination, only nearness of place, as the Targum, "he that encamped next to him".

"And with him two hundred and fourscore thousand": 280,000 which number was but 20,000 less than the former.

This is 280,000 men that Jehohanan captained.

2 Chronicles 17:16 "And next him [was] Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself unto the LORD; and with him two hundred thousand mighty men of valor."

Think of the potential impact in the world today if God's people were to act like "Amasiah ... who willingly offered himself unto the Lord".

It is interesting that this high officer in the army had dedicated his office as a soldier to the LORD. These 200,000 men were favored to have an officer who loved God.

2 Chronicles 17:17 "And of Benjamin; Eliada a mighty man of valor, and with him armed men with bow and shield two hundred thousand."

Was the chief commander.

"And with armed men with bow and shield two hundred thousand": Which were the armor of the tribe of Benjamin they were best skilled in (2 Chron. 14:8).

2 Chronicles 17:18 And next him [was] Jehozabad, and with him a hundred and fourscore thousand ready prepared for the war.

According to the Targum he encamped next him.

"And with him one hundred and fourscore thousand ready prepared for war": Being able bodied men, well disciplined, valiant, and well-armed. These numbers of Judah and Benjamin put together amount to 1,160,000 men. Whereas Asa only brought into the field 580,000. But it should be considered there had been a long time of peace, many had come off from the ten tribes to Judah. And the promise of multiplying the seed of Abraham was eminently fulfilled.

The first men mentioned were of Judah. Now this one was from Benjamin. These 200,000 of Eliada would have been expert in bows. The 180,000 of Jehozabad would have been foot-soldiers.

2 Chronicles 17:19 "These waited on the king, beside [those] whom the king put in the fenced cities throughout all Judah."

Not this vast number of men at one time, but in course, as David's military men waited on him (1 Chron. 27:1). Or each of these captains, with a proper number of men under them detached from the body. And they were all ready to obey the king's orders whenever he should have occasion for them.

"Besides those whom the king put into the fenced cities throughout Judah": And all together, the militia of the kingdom was very numerous and formidable.

It appears that literally hundreds of thousands of soldiers were stationed in Jerusalem. There were other soldiers dispatched to stop any attack, before it came to Jerusalem. We can see the blessings by seeing the men who were devoted to the security of Jerusalem. These fenced cities away from Jerusalem were like front line fortresses. Jehoshaphat was indeed, blessed of God as David had been.

2 Chronicles Chapter 17 Questions

1. Who reigned in Asa's stead?
2. Who did he strengthen himself against?
3. How old was Jehoshaphat, when he began to reign?

4. Who was his mother?
5. Why did he place forces in the fenced cities of Judah?
6. Why was the LORD with Jehoshaphat?
7. What was David to him, really?
8. Who was one of the wicked kings of Israel, that reigned in Israel during the time Jehoshaphat reigned in Judah?
9. Who was one of the false gods of Israel?
10. What did all Judah bring to Jehoshaphat?
11. Did they do this, because it was required?
12. Who is blessed, when the king follows God?
13. Verse 6 says he did what?
14. Who had begun to do that in his reign?
15. What special thing did he do in the third year of his reign?
16. What had the land done, that we can relate to our land today?
17. What will get them back in good standing with God?
18. What lesson can we take from that?
19. Who did he send to teach them the law?
20. What is the comment the author made on verse 9?
21. And the fear of the _____ fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah.
22. What were the Philistine's gifts, really?
23. What did the Arabians bring to Jehoshaphat?
24. What did Jehoshaphat build during this time?
25. Who was the captain, that was like a general?
26. Whose men were armed with bow and shield?

27. These hundreds of thousands were located in _____, and others were in the fenced cities.