

2CHRONICLES 17: 1 Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place, and strengthened himself against Israel.

Jehoshaphat succeeds his father Asa, and reigns piously, and is particularly blessed, 2Chr 17:1-6. He establishes an itinerant ministry, for the instruction of the people, through all the cities of Judah, which produces the most beneficial effects, 2Chr 17:7-10. The Philistines and Arabians bring him gifts, 2Chr 17:11. His greatness, 2Chr 17:12, 2Chr 17:13. The commanders of his troops, 2Chr 17:14-19.

Verse 1

Jehoshaphat - and strengthened himself against Israel - The kingdoms of Israel and Judah were rivals from the beginning; sometimes one, sometimes the other, prevailed. Asa and Baasha were nearly matched; but, after Baasha's death, Israel was greatly weakened by civil contentions, and Jehoshaphat got the ascendancy. See 1Kgs 16:16-23.

2CHRONICLES 17: 2 He placed forces in all the fortified cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim, which Asa his father had taken.

Verse 2

The cities of Ephraim - This conquest from the kingdom of Israel is referred to, 2Chr 15:8; but when it was made we do not know.

2CHRONICLES 17: 3 The LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and didn't seek the Baals,

Verse 3

The Lord was with Jehoshaphat - "The Word of the Lord was Jehoshaphat's Helper." - Targum.

2CHRONICLES 17: 4 but sought to the God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel.

2CHRONICLES 17: 5 Therefore the LORD established the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat tribute; and he had riches and honour in abundance.

2CHRONICLES 17: 6 His heart was lifted up in the ways of the LORD: and furthermore he took away the high places and the Asherah poles out of Judah.

2CHRONICLES 17: 7 Also in the third year of his reign he sent his princes, even Ben Hail, and Obadiah, and Zechariah, and Nethanel, and Micaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah;

 Verse 7

To teach in the cities of Judah - "To teach the fear of the Lord in the cities of Judah." - Targum.

In these verses we find a remarkable account of an itinerant ministry established by Jehoshaphat; and in this work he employed three classes of men:

1. The princes.
2. The Levites.
3. The priests.

We may presume that the princes instructed the people in the nature of the civil law and constitution of the kingdom; the Levites instructed them in every thing that appertained to the temple service, and ritual law; and the priests instructed them in the nature and design of the religion they professed. Thus the nation became thoroughly instructed in their duty to God, to the king, and to each other. They became, therefore, as one man; and against a people thus united, on such principles, no enemy could be successful.

2CHRONICLES 17: 8 and with them the Levites, even Shemaiah, and Nethaniah, and Zebadiah, and Asahel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehonathan, and Adonijah, and Tobijah, and Tobadonijah, the Levites; and with them Elishama and Jehoram, the priests.

2CHRONICLES 17: 9 They taught in Judah, having the book of the LORD's law with them; and they went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught among the people.

Verse 9

Had the book of the law of the Lord with them - This was their text book: it was the book of God; they taught it as such, and as such the people received it. Its laws were God's laws, and the people felt their obligation, and their consciences were bound. Thus they were obedient to the laws of the land, on the principle of religion. In this they were encouraged and confirmed by the example of all, both in Church and state. The princes were not only pious, but were teachers of piety; the Levites showed them the worth and excellence of their ritual institutions; and the priests showed them the moral use they were to make of the whole: and thus the people became obedient to God as well as to the king, and kept all the civil ordinances, not merely for the sake of a good king, but for the sake of a good and gracious God. By these means the nation enjoyed peace and prosperity; and all insurrections, seditions, and popular commotions, were prevented. The surrounding nations, perceiving this, saw that there was no hope of subduing such a people, so they made no war with Jehoshaphat, 2Chr 17:10. And they took care not to provoke such a people to fall on them; therefore, it is said, The fear of the Lord fell on all the kingdoms and lands that were round about Judah. Such an itinerant ministry established in these kingdoms for upwards of fourscore years, teaching the pure, unadulterated doctrines of the Gospel, with the propriety and necessity of obedience to the laws, has been the principal means, in the hand of God, of preserving these lands from those convulsions and revolutions that have ruined and nearly dissolved the European continent. The itinerant ministry, to which this refers, is that which was established in these lands by the late truly reverend, highly learned and cultivated, deeply pious and loyal John Wesley, A.M.,

formerly a fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, whose followers are known by the name of Methodists; a people who are an honor to their country, and a blessing to the government under which they live.

2CHRONICLES 17: 10 The fear of the LORD fell on all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat.

2CHRONICLES 17: 11 Some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and silver for tribute; the Arabians also brought him flocks, seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred male goats.

Verse 11

The Philistines brought - presents - They and the Arabians purchased peace with the king of Judah by paying an annual tribute. The Philistines brought silver, and no doubt different kinds of merchandise, The Arabs, whose riches consisted in cattle, brought him flocks in great abundance, principally rams and he-goats.

2CHRONICLES 17: 12 Jehoshaphat grew great exceedingly; and he built in Judah castles and cities of store.

2CHRONICLES 17: 13 He had many works in the cities of Judah; and men of war, mighty men of valor, in Jerusalem.

Verse 13

He had much business in the cities - He kept the people constantly employed; they had wages for their work; and by their labors the empire was both enriched and strengthened.

2CHRONICLES 17: 14 This was the numbering of them according to their fathers' houses: Of Judah, the captains of thousands: Adnah the captain, and with him mighty men of valor three hundred thousand;

Verse 14

Adnah, the chief - He was generalissimo of all this host. These are the numbers of the five battalions: under Adnah, three hundred thousand; Jehohanan, two hundred and eighty thousand, Amasiah, two hundred thousand; Eliada, two hundred thousand; Jehozabad, one hundred and eighty thousand; in all, one million one hundred and sixty thousand.

2CHRONICLES 17: 15 and next to him Jehohanan the captain, and with him two hundred eighty thousand;

2CHRONICLES 17: 16 and next to him Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself to the LORD; and with him two hundred thousand mighty men of valor.

2CHRONICLES 17: 17 Of Benjamin: Eliada a mighty man of valor, and with him two hundred thousand armed with bow and shield;

2CHRONICLES 17: 18 and next to him Jehozabad and with him one hundred eighty thousand ready prepared for war.

2CHRONICLES 17: 19 These were those who waited on the king, besides those whom the king put in the fortified cities throughout all Judah.

Verse 19

These waited on the king - They were disposable forces, always at the king's command; and were independent of those by which the cities of Judah were garrisoned.

There is not a sovereign in Europe or in the world but might read this chapter with advantage.

1. It shows most forcibly that true religion is the basis of the state, and that, wherever it prospers, there the state prospers.
2. It shows also that it is the wisdom of kings to encourage religion with all their power and influence; for if the hearts of the subjects be not bound and influenced by true religion, vain is the application of laws, fines, imprisonments, or corporal punishment of any kind.
3. A religious nation is ever a great nation; it is loved by its friends, it is dreaded by its enemies.
4. It is ever a peaceable and united nation: the blessings of religion, and a wholesome and paternal government, are so fully felt and prized, that all find it their interest to preserve and defend them. Harmony, peace, piety, and strength, are the stability of such times. May Britain know and value them!