

**No King In
Israel**





“In those days there was **no king in Israel; everyone did what was right **in his own eyes.**”**



A Key Theme in Judges

“No king in Israel”

- Appears **4 times** in the text
- In those days there was **no king in Israel**; everyone did what was right in his own eyes. (17.6)
- In those days there was **no king in Israel**. And in those days the tribe of the Danites was seeking an inheritance for itself to dwell in; for until that day their inheritance among the tribes of Israel had not fallen to them. (18.1)



A Key Theme in Judges

“No king in Israel”

- Appears **4 times** in the text
- And it came to pass in those days, when there was **no king in Israel**, that there was a certain Levite staying in the remote mountains of Ephraim. He took for himself a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah. (19.1)
- In those days there was **no king in Israel**; everyone did what was right in his own eyes. (21.25)



The Context in Judges

Judges 17.6

- In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.
- **Context:** The **idolatry** of Micah
 - Micah **stole** 1100 silver shekels from his mother • He later **returned** it
 - His mother gave it back to Micah • She intended it to be used to build an **idol**
 - Micah created a **shrine** with carved **images** • an **ephod** • his **son** as priest
 - Micah hired/supported a **“Levitical”** priest • **Assumed** God would bless him
- **“No king** in Israel” appears in the **middle** of Micah’s shrine building process



The Context in Judges

Judges 17.6 - "No king" (first thoughts)

- **God** was **always** Israel's king (1 Sam 8.7, 10.19, 12.12, 17, 19, Judg 8.23)
- Though **not** God's **initial** will, God **allowed** Israel to have kings
 - **Prophesied** (Deut 17): Israel **requested** a king • God **allowed** a king • God **chose** the king • God **restricted** the king • God **directed** the king • the king **"wrote"** a copy of God's law • God directed the king (-> nation) **through his law**
- God **anointed**, but Israel did **not** always listen to, **prophets** • **priests** • **kings**
 - Even when *ppk* were right, Israel (nation/individuals) often went their **own way**
 - **"No king" (cause)** = no real/stable leadership • **morally** • **politically** • **militarily**
 - **Everyone** did what **they wanted (consequence)**



The Context in Judges

Judges 18.1

- In those days there was no king in Israel. And in those days the tribe of the Danites was seeking an inheritance for itself to dwell in; for until that day their inheritance among the tribes of Israel had not fallen to them.
- **Context:** The **idolatry** of Micah **expands** to the tribe of Dan
 - Dan sought an **inheritance** • Dan sent spies to search for **land** • The spies came to **Micah's** house • They met Micah's "**priest**" • Micah's priest "**blessed**" them • When they returned, the spies (& Dan) **took** Micah's priest as their **own** • After conquering Laish, Dan **fully established** "Micah's priesthood"
 - They did so "all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh"



The Context in Judges

Judges 18.1 - "No king" (second thoughts)

- **No king** = no **centralized** authority • no one to **hold Israel accountable**
- Tribes functioned **independently** re • **morals** • **politics** • **military exploits** • **economics** • Judges resolved **local, not** national problems (sins)
- **No king** ≠ that there were **no laws** • **no principles** to govern Israel re morals, etc.
- **Everyone** doing what was right in their own eyes = **everyone** became a **king**
- Judges teaches that, generally speaking, Israel said: "God, we **will not submit** to **your word** and fulfill **your will**. We will become a law **unto ourselves** and fulfill **our own will**."
- After first appearance in 17.6, "**no king**" sums up the Micah idolatry extract and then **introduces** • **explains** • almost "**excuses**" the behavior of 18.1ff, 19.1ff



The Context in Judges

Judges 19.1

- And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite staying in the remote mountains of Ephraim. He took for himself a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah.
- **Context:** Benjaminites from Gibeah **rape** and **kill** a Levite's concubine
- Levite's concubine was unfaithful • She returned to her father • Levite went to bring her back • They left her father and journeyed toward Ephraim • Levite refused to lodge in Jebus/Jerusalem (city of foreigners) • Traveled on to and lodged in Gibeah • Men of Gibeah desired the Levite • Host/Levite offered virgin daughter & concubine • They took the concubine, abused, raped, killed her



The Context in Judges

Judges 19.1

- And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite staying in the remote mountains of Ephraim. He took for himself a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah.
- **Context:** Levite returned home • Sent the concubine's body in 12 pieces to Israel • Demanded a response • Israel responded • Levite told his story • Asked for Israel's input • Israel determined to hold men of Gibeah accountable • Benjamin refused to yield the guilty men • War ensued • Benjamin was initially (twice) victorious, but Israel eventually defeated — and nearly decimated — Benjamin • provisions were made to “repopulate” the tribe of Benjamin



The Context in Judges

Judges 19.1 - "No king" (third thoughts)

- **No king** - already introduced re Micah's idolatry • already explained/"excused" Dan's idolatry • appears a third time to explain/"excuse" the men of Gibeah's sin
- **appears** to **justify** almost any kind of departure from God's will/word/work
 - Disregarding/disrespecting God and his will/word yields ...
 - Moving **away from** the **worship** that God desires (Micah's/Dan's idolatry)
 - Moving **away from** the **way of life** that God accepts (Gibeah's sins)
- **No king** - always appears in 17-21, a decidedly **northern-centered** Israel text
 - Focuses on characters in Ephraim, Gibeah, Dan • Levite "questioned" the hospitality of the "foreigners" in Jebus/Jerusalem



The Context in Judges

Judges 21.25

- In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.
- **Context:** Final occurrence of “**no king**” appears in the last verse of the text
 - It does **not** introduce a “new” context/sin (cf Micah, Dan, Levite/concubine)
 - It does **not** explain/“excuse” a new departure from God’s will/word/work
 - It’s appearance here seems to **summarize** ...
 - The book of Judges as a whole
 - The specific events that took place in northern Israel (17-21)
 - It provides a/the reason **why** these events occurred:
 - **Cause** (no king) -> **Consequence** (the sins of 17-21)



The Context in Judges

Judges 21.25 - “No king” (fourth thoughts)

- **No king** = Israel had **no** leader, either good or bad • Israel violated God’s will, engaged in “**covenantal misbehavior**” • assumes **any king** would be better than **no king** • anticipates a “**better**” time when Israel had kings • **assumes** that time would bring about **all-Israel** — *not just* tribal — loyalty, uphold **social justice** and observe **faithful worship** • anticipates a time when future kings would be **no better** than the era of judges, thus **no better** than “everyone doing what was right in their own eyes” • reflects Israel’s **failure** of God’s/their **original** goals • simply reflects Israel’s **ongoing** unfaithfulness • indirectly affirms that **God** was **still** faithful to his word/promises/Israel, thus **still** merciful and gracious • [continued]



The Context in Judges

Judges 21.25 - "No king" (fourth thoughts)

- **No king** = reflects a **southern (Judah)** perspective about what the northern kings were (no better than having "no king") • anticipates a future, "**better**," king ... the **Messiah** • simply reflects a **God-rejecting/human empowering** perspective that yields the commentary/narrative of Judges • *reflects an **evolving** understanding of Israel's spiritual responsibility • anticipates a "**corrective**" king that would not tolerate the Judges' commentary/narrative • *reflects Israel's naively "**innocent**," yet most **misinformed**, desire to please God • connected 17-21 as a way to show the leadership/obedience-disobedience relationship was "**northern**" oriented • Jeroboam's religion was as **authorized/unauthorized** as Micah's/Dan's idolatry



The Principles in Judges

What “defines” judges?

- The absence of a “king in Israel” **does not fully** “define” judges
- It’s **true**, there was “**no king** in Israel” during this period
 - But having a “king in Israel” **would not** have resolved Israel’s problems then
 - How do we know that?
 - Question: Did the **future kings** resolve all of Israel’s problems? **No!**
 - The point: Israel’s problems were **greater** than the absence of **any king**
- Questions to answer:
 - **Why** does the expression “no king in Israel” **appear** to **sum up** Judges?
 - **What** does the expression **really** mean? (see prior slides/following slides)



The Principles in Judges

What “defines” judges?

- “Throughout the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua-Kings), the narrator explores and probes the nature of God’s relationship with Israel. Will God’s holiness and his demand for obedience to his commands override his promises to Israel? Or will his irrevocable commitment to the nation, his gracious promises to the patriarchs, mean that he will somehow overlook their sin? As much as theologians may seek to establish the priority of law over grace or grace over law, the book of Judges will not settle this question. [continued]



The Principles in Judges

What “defines” judges?

- “What Judges gives the reader is not a systematic theology, but rather the history of a relationship. Judges leaves us with a paradox: God’s relationship with Israel is at once both conditional and unconditional. He will not remove his favor, but Israel must live in obedience and faith to inherit the promise. It is this very tension that more than anything else propels the entire narrative.” [Dillard, Longman, An Introduction to the OT, 127.]

