



# PATHWAY BIBLE GUIDES

JUDGES

# There Was No King in Israel





After God's dramatic delivery of Israel from her slavery in Egypt, and her subsequent 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, under Joshua's leadership the Israelites have now *finally* entered the promised land. They can get on with obeying God, and a new era of peace can begin.

Except that they don't, and it doesn't.

Instead of faithfully living by the laws given to them by the God who mercifully rescued them, "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" because "in those days there was no king in Israel". Despite God's repeated gracious intervention, the people's sinful behaviour gets progressively worse.

What they need is a king to help break the cycle of sin and judgement. The judges saved them from their enemies; what they need is a king to save them from themselves.

In these 8 studies, Des Smith guides us through the era of the judges in Israel, pointing us clearly to the true king God's people need.

**8 studies. Leader's notes included.**

## Pathway Bible Guides

Straightforward Bible studies for small groups

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ISBN 978-1-925424-59-1



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**PATHWAY BIBLE GUIDES**

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# **There Was No King in Israel**

**JUDGES**

**BY DES SMITH**



**matthiasmedia**

SYDNEY • YOUNGSTOWN

*There Was No King in Israel*  
Pathway Bible Guides: Judges  
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Matthias Media  
(St Matthias Press Ltd ACN 067 558 365)  
Email: [info@matthiasmedia.com.au](mailto:info@matthiasmedia.com.au)  
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ISBN 978 1 925424 59 1

Cover design and typesetting by Lankshear Design.

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# BEFORE YOU BEGIN

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Imagine you're in a jungle. It's tropical: the air is hot and sticky, the trees are covered with creepers, and the sky is full of the sounds of exotic, unseen animals. It's dark: the canopy is dense. And it's freaky: snakes curl around branches and huge, hairy spiders stare at you with too many eyes and creep around on too many legs.

But then suddenly you're in sunshine! You blink your eyes in the sudden light and realize you're in a clearing. There is lawn all about you. Hedges and neat flowerbeds fill the space. A table and some chairs sit under a tree. You're in a garden.

Your first thought is: What an amazing garden! Your second thought is: What an amazing *gardener*, to have formed such a wonderful space out of the awful jungle around it. And your third thought is: I want to stay here.

This garden is what Old Testament Israel was meant to be. Ever since Genesis 3, humanity had rebelled against God and the world had become a jungle of sin and suffering. But God was determined to restore his world, and he began by forming a new nation: Israel. In the book of Joshua, we read of God putting this nation into a new land, Canaan, and commanding them to drive out its inhabitants so that Israel could live there in peace. It was also so that Israel wouldn't be tempted to

worship the Canaanites' gods and revert to paganism, thus becoming indistinguishable from the nations around it. Israel was to be a 'showcase' of what a nation living under God could be like—a 'garden in the jungle', if you like. Remaining distinct from the world was therefore vital.

Judges is the story of how Israel went at this mission after the death of Joshua and before the rise of the kings. And the answer is: badly. Israel compromises almost from the start—failing to expel the Canaanites, letting them keep their idols, and eventually worshipping those idols themselves. God gets angry, understandably, and punishes the Israelites by sending the Canaanites to oppress them. Israel eventually cries out for help and God, in his mercy, raises up a leader—a 'judge'—to rescue them, bringing peace for a time. But then the judge dies, the Israelites fall back into their old ways, and the cycle begins again: sin, oppression, repentance, deliverance, peace; sin, oppression, repentance, deliverance, peace... This is essentially the story of Judges.

What the book of Judges tells us is that there is nothing inherently special about the nation of Israel: left to its own devices, it quickly 'reverts to jungle' like the rest of the nations. But what Judges also tells us is that God is merciful. Time and again Israel sins, and time and again God intervenes by sending a judge to save them from their enemies. By the end of the book, the question we're asking is, "How on earth is Israel still here?" and the answer is, "Only because God has repeatedly saved them".

Judges also tells us that for God's people to survive in the long term, they need a king. Listen to the book's last line, seemingly explaining all their problems: "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg 21:25; see also 17:6, 18:1, 19:1) What Israel needs is a king to stop people from simply doing as they see fit, and so break the cycle of sin and judgement. The judges saved them from their enemies; what they need is a king to save them from themselves. This side of the cross, we know exactly the king they need.

*Des Smith*

August 2019

# 1. AFTER THE DEATH OF JOSHUA...

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Judges 1:1-3:6



## Getting started

If you were to name one aspect of the world's thinking or behaviour that tempts you to be disobedient to God, what would it be?





4. What is the apparent reason the Israelites fail to drive out the Canaanites?

Read Judges 2:1-5.

5. According to God, what is the real reason Israel fails to drive out the Canaanites?

Read Judges 2:6-3:6.

6. 2:10-19 summarizes the entire period of the judges. What pattern do the Israelites follow during this time?

- a. 2:11-13

- b. 2:14-15

c. 2:16

d. 2:17-19

7. How does God respond (2:20-22)?

Read Romans 5:6-11.

8. What has God done about the constant problem of our rebellion against him? What is the result for us?

