I. Slide1 Announce:

II. Slide3 Intro: Shibboleth
   A. The Political Climate in the Early Iron Age [3 age system, to classify ancient societies: *Stone - Bronze - Iron*]
      1. Slide4a In the **Late Bronze Age** (1550–1200 b.c.) there was an ongoing struggle between *major political powers* seeking control of *Palestine*.
      2. With the arrival of *the Sea Peoples* (*Philistines*) around 1200, all of the major powers were either wiped out (e.g., the Hittites) or neutralized (Egypt).
      3. Moving into the **Iron Age** (just about this point in the book of Judges), the power stalemate has been replaced by a **power vacuum**.
         a) The absence of *major powers* vying for control of the region allowed the **smaller states** to test their strength, develop and build regional **empires**.
         b) The *Philistines* were able to take advantage of this early in the period.
         c) Then *David* and *Solomon* were able to build a substantial empire in *Syro-Palestine* without needing to be concerned about political powers in *Mesopotamia, Anatolia or Egypt*.¹ [The IVP Bible background commentary]
   B. Slide4b Jephthah’s judgeship is framed by a brief mention of the 5 so called *minor judges*
   C. Israel slides **further and further** down the slippery slope.
      1. Jephthah & Samson use their position for revenge & personal gain, adding to the sins of the previous generation.

III. Slide5 **MINOR JUDGES** (10)
   A. Slide6 **TOLA**, 6th JUDGE (1,2)
   B. **Tola, son of Puah, son of Dodo** (just love the way that sounds)
   C. Slide7a **JAIR**, 7th JUDGE (3-5)

D. Known for 30 sons, who rode 30 donkeys, owned 30 villages who walked a crooked mile. He found a crooked sixpence upon a crooked stile. He bought a crooked cat, which caught a crooked mouse. And they all lived together in a little crooked house. :)

E. Slide7b Tola & Jair brought justice to Israel for over a generation.

F. No great deeds of valor are recorded for either man, but they gave nation 45 yrs of peace.
   1. No foreign invaders are named, so these 2 judges served by solving the internal problems of the nation.
   2. They were administrators rather than generals; we need both.
      a) Maybe these men can be likened to the disciples of Jesus whom we know only by name. These judges provide an example of quiet but effective leadership in Israel.
      b) Their service was important enough to warrant mentioned in the Bible.
   3. But, when there’re no battles to fight, we tend to take our blessings for granted, which often leads us to sin. So it did.

G. So God has to send an invasion of Ammonites to get their attention...

H. Slide8 ISRAEL’ OPPRESSION (6-18)

I. So Israel again turns from God & falls under the hand of foreign invaders.
   1. This time the enemies were the Philistines on the coast (from West) & the Ammonites in Transjordan (from East). Caught in the middle? Judah, Benj & Ephraim

J. (14) I love God’s divine Sarcasm.

K. Ask: What is the difference between their confession of vs.10 & vs.15,16?
   1. Remorse(mind) & Regret(mind, heart) are different from Repentance(mind, heart, will)
   2. In vs10 it was insincere, born out of suffering. In vs.15,16 it was accompanied by repentance & the putting away of sin. God wants true repentance, not just lip service.
   3. Ask: Has God changed on this in the NT or does He desire the same from us?
   4. Ask: What do we learn about our God from 16b?

IV. Slide9 JEPHTHAH, 8TH JUDGE (11)

A. Slide10 JUDGE JEPHTHAH (1-28)
B. Son of a harlot - no person should be blamed for the circumstances surrounding his or her birth.

1. Why permit the things you cannot control to burden your life? Learn to accept them, and the Lord will work out His purposes in His own time.
   a) Slide11 Ps.139:13-16
      You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother’s womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous - how well I know it. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.
   b) Opposition will one day give way to opportunity. Warren Wiersbe

C. Slide12 His band of merry men - men living off the grid.

1. There would be groups of men like this who would follow a charismatic personality, living largely under their own authority.
   a) Sometimes they would cooperate with existing authority structures. Other times opposing them. They were gangs. They flourished during times where centralized authority was weakened.
   b) So Abimelech, Jephthah, Ishbosheth, Jeroboam, & even David became commanders of bands of men who had withdrawn from society.

D. Note: he was able to defeat the enemy on the battlefield, but unable to maintain peace at home.

E. Slide13 JEPHTHAH’S VOW & VICTORY (29-33)

F. On one hand he was a man who had faith & courage & who depended on God’s power for victory. But all is not well...he makes a rash vow.

G. Compare Jephthah’s vow to Eccl.5:2-6

   1. This teaches us about the sacredness of a promise to God & the necessity of 1st considering what such a promise may involve.

H. Slide14 JEPHTHAH’S DAUGHTER (34-40)

I. His daughter...his only child...the one who danced with joy at daddy coming home.

J. Human sacrifice or prevented from marrying, thus not able to carry on his name (39).
1. Text is unclear. Dedicated her to Temple service, to serve the Lord (unmarried)?

2. Weight lands on that he did sacrifice her. But it doesn’t mean he was right, didn’t mean the Lord accepted it or approved of that offering.

K. *Note: Israel* do not deserve to be delivered. And *Jephthah* did not deserve to be used.

1. Can you relate? Sometimes God’s ways are difficult to understand, but His purposes always prevail.

L. God provided the victory, but His people marred the consequences.

V. Slide15 SHIBBOLETH (12)

A. Slide16 CIVIL WAR (1-7) *who wins in a civil war?* no one.

B. Jephthah’s men had seized the natural crossing points along the river.

1. They used a linguistic test to determine which of the men crossing the Jordan were escaping Ephraimites.

2. Some scholars have argued Gileadites said *Thibboleth* & the Ephraimites said *Shibboleth*. But either way, they pronounced it with an accent.
   a) Shibboleth = flowing stream, or ear of grain.
   b) Shibboleth in our Eng dictionary today means *a test for determining if you belong.*
      (1) If you don’t *conform exactly* to what a group demands, you’re rejected.
      (2) Some Christians make these *minor matters* a test of spirituality and fellowship and bring *division* to the church.

C. Last 3 minor Judges:

D. Slide17 IZBAN, 9th JUDGE (8-10)

E. Slide18 ELON, 10th JUDGE (11,12)

F. Slide19a ABDON, 11th JUDGE (13-15)

G. Note his identity was found not in a tribe but in a local clan (Pirathon/hill country of Ephraim)

1. In tribal society, allegiance was *first to one’s family, then to one’s extended family or clan, next to one’s tribe, finally to one’s nation.*

2. Tribal unity was next to *impossible* to maintain during the times of the judges.

H. Slide19b Next week...Samson. *A he-man with a she-weakness.*