Reading Joshua

<u>The Big Picture</u>

1-5 Israel crosses the Jordan and goes into the land
- 1-2 Preparation to enter the land
- 3-4 Crossing of the Jordan
- 5 Covenant renewal

5-12 Israel battles the Canaanites for the land
- 5-6 The Battle with Jericho
- 7-8 Israel's sin and failure
- 9 Covenant with the Gibeonites
- 10-12 Battles with the Canaanites

13-22 Boundaries of the land for the 12 tribes

23-24 Joshua's final words to Israel

<u>Key Themes in Joshua:</u>

1. Joshua replaces Moses and leads the people to the land of Canaan.
   - He is called to follow the Torah of Moses (= the 'teaching of Moses') and to lead Israel in faithfulness to Yahweh: see 1:1-9; 5:2-12; 8:30-35
   - Joshua is like a "new Moses" for Israel:
     - He sends out spies to Jericho (Joshua 2, like Moses in Numbers 13-14)
     - He leads the people through the Jordan on dry land (Joshua 3-4, like Moses in Exodus 14-15)
     - He conducts the first Passover festival in the land (Joshua 5, like Moses in Exodus 12-13)
     - He renews the covenant between Yahweh and Israel (Joshua 8:30-35, like Moses in Exodus 24)
2. Yahweh uses Israel to bring judgment on the Canaanites and to drive them from the land.
   - The moral corruption of the Canaanites had been worsening for centuries (see Genesis 15:16; Leviticus 18:24-28) and expulsion from the land is punishment for their injustice (see Leviticus 20:22-26; Deuteronomy 9:4-6).
   - Canaanites who turned to Yahweh were spared from judgment (Joshua 2, 9)
   - Canaanites who opposed Israel were conquered: Chapters 10-12.
   - Israel followed a common ancient practice of 'holy war' in which the inhabitants of the cities were dedicated to their god and destroyed.
     - This was not to be Israel's policy with any nation outside of the handful of Canaanite people groups; they were to seek peace with all other nations (see Deuteronomy 20)
     - **These stories will probably bother you. That's OK.** They illustrate how God's plan to partner with humans in bringing judgment and salvation will have to be involved in the mess of human sin and injustice.
     - In Israel's later history, these stories were not used to legitimate violence towards other nations. Rather, these battles were reminders of Yahweh's faithfulness to his promises.
3. Yahweh gives the land to Israel in fulfillment of his promises to Abraham: Joshua 21:43-45; 23:14 (the detailed boundary lists in chapters 13-21 are meant to emphasize this idea)
4. Israel's occupation of the land depends on their faithfulness to Yahweh and the covenant made at Mt. Sinai
   - Yahweh gives the land as a gift; Israel must honor the covenant if they want to stay there; the result of rebellion will be exile from the land: see Joshua 23
   - Joshua concludes by challenging Israel to worship Yahweh alone and to follow the terms of the covenant: see Joshua 24