

1) If the church is so rubbish, is God's Word going to fail in this generation?

Our churches are tiny. There are lots of problems in them. False teachers are loud and popular. Many of us don't have much time, money, energy, or influence. And the churches themselves are full of people who make mistakes, fall out with each other, and don't really know how to connect with the culture around them.

So—given all of this—if the church is so rubbish, is God's Word going to fail in this generation?

You've got a few mins in breakout groups to talk about that together.

What makes us feel this way?

What do we think the answer is?

2) How to Read Genesis

Luther did not write an introduction to every book of the Bible, including Genesis. But he wrote introductions for some Old Testament books. We can learn from his example.

Luther understood that Christ is the centre and goal of every book of the Bible (as Jesus himself tells us, Luke 24:25-26, 44-49). So, he started by asking how Jesus and the apostles fulfilled and explained the books of the Old Testament. The New Testament teaches us how to read the Old Testament.

Here's a few observations:

1. Literally True

The New Testament takes everything Genesis says as literally and seriously true. The best example is the creation account:

- God created all things (Matt 19:4-5; Mark 10:6-8; Luke 11:50-51; Acts 17:24-26; 1 Cor 8:6; Rev 4:11; 10:6).
- And he did this through his Word (John 1:1-3; Heb 11:3).

So, not only does the New Testament treat the creation account as literally true (God created everything in 6 days), but the details of **how** Genesis explains it teach us something true (God did this by speaking).

2. The Order of Events

The New Testament takes Genesis so literally that the Apostles tell us that even the **order in which events occur** in Genesis matters:

- Creation of man—>woman (1 Cor 11:7-8; 1 Tim 2:12-14)
- Faith—>circumcision (Rom 4:9-11)
- Sin —> death —> law (Rom 5:12-13)
- Marriage—>sin, so divorce is only because of sin: (Matthew 19:3-4)
- Promise to Abraham—>Law to Israel: (Rom 4:16-18)
- Abraham giving tithes to Melchizedek—>Israel gave tithes to the Levites (Hebrews 7:4-10)
- Choosing of Jacob—>Jacob and Esau were born (Romans 9:11-12)

The significance of the order of events is rightly understood through Law and Gospel.

3. The Meaning of People's Names

Genesis itself often points out the reader that someone is given a particular name, or has their name changed. And it says this is significant. Examples:

Gen. 3:20 The man named his wife Eve because she was the mother of all the living.

Gen. 17:5 Your name will no longer be Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I will make you the father of many nations.

The New Testament explicitly reads the meaning of people's names, or interprets people in light of their names:

- **Heb. 7:1-2** For this Melchizedek, king of Salem... First, his name means king of righteousness, then also, king of Salem, meaning king of peace.

Here are some names in Genesis and what they mean:

- Adam: "ground"
- Eve: "living"
- Cain: "[I have] achieved/purchased"; Abel: "[I am] breath [i.e. nothing]"
- Noah: "rest/comfort"
- Babel, sounds like the word "confused"
- Abraham: "father of many"
- Melchizedek: "God is righteous"; Salem: "peace"
- Isaac: "he laughs"
- Jacob: "someone who supplants another"; Israel: "struggles with God"
- Levi: "joined/attached"
- Joseph: "God will increase"

4. Permanent Significance

The Apostles treat what happens in Genesis as having permanent significance for all of creation:

- The creation pattern of men and women (1 Cor 11:8-9)
- Marriage (Matt 19:4-6)
- The fall (Rom 5:12-19)
- Work, suffering and death (Rom 8:20-22)
- Justification by faith (Rom 4:23-24)
- Law and Gospel (Gal 3:17-18)

5. It's all about Jesus

The New Testament says that the true reality of Genesis is it's all about Jesus and the New Covenant:

- The Sabbath is fulfilled in being with Christ (Heb 4:9-10)
- Adam is truly fulfilled in Christ as the Last Adam (Rom 5:12-19)
- Marriage is truly fulfilled in Christ and the Church (Eph 5:31-32)
- The promise of the serpent crusher is truly fulfilled in Jesus (Rom 16:20—and in a certain sense through us!)
- Noah's ark is truly fulfilled in being united to Jesus in baptism. (1 Pet 3:20-21)
- Noah's flood is truly fulfilled when Christ returns. (2 Pet 3:5-7)
- The promise Abraham would have many children is truly fulfilled in being in Christians. (Gal 3:7)
- The seed of Abraham is fulfilled in Christ (Gal 3:8)
- Sarah is truly fulfilled in the Church (Gal 4:26)
- Melchizedek is truly fulfilled in Jesus as our high priest (Heb 7:11-17)
- Circumcision is truly fulfilled in being united to Jesus in baptism (Col 2:11-12)
- The election of Jacob is truly fulfilled in the election of the church (Rom 9:10-13)
- The rejection and exaltation of Joseph is truly fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Christ (Acts 7:9-14; Phil 2:6-11)

What do you learn from the New Testament about how to read and understand Genesis?

3) The Structure of Genesis

Genesis is organised around the stories of ancestors. This is how history was told in the ancient world. "These are the generations of..." Reading this sentence, we see Genesis has 11 parts:

1:1-2:3

Creation

1:1-31 God makes everything in 6 days by his Word, finishing with man
2:1-3 God rests.

2:4-4:26

The Heavens and the Earth

2:4-14 God makes Eden
2:15-25 God makes Adam and Eve, marriage, gives them his Word and Law
3 Satan tempts them to disbelief; God's Word protects & promises
4:1-16 Abel (faith) is killed by Cain (frustrated at God's Word)
4:17-26 The line of Cain (people without the Word)

5:1-6:8

Adam

5 Death is now real.
But—this is also a line of prophets who have and speak the Word
5:22 Enoch walked with God and didn't die
5:29 Lamech prophesies
5:32 Noah born
6:1-8 But, the line of prophets are seduced to evil through lust (6th)

6:9-9:29

Noah

6:9-8:22 Judgement and salvation come through God's Word
9:1-17 God's Word is gracious and makes a new creation
9:18-28 But, Noah and sons fall into evil through alcohol (4th)

10:1-11:9

Noah's sons

10:1-32 They spread out
11:1-8 But, the people are tempted to evil through pride (1st)

11:10-26

Shem

What matters is God's promise of a seed.

11:27-32

Terah

11:27-32 The human cost of trusting God's Word
12:1-9 God's promise: so Abram has no home here
12:10-20 Abram fails to trust God's protection—God blesses him anyway
13-14 Lot lives by sight, Abram lives by faith
15 Abram is righteous by faith
16 Abram fails to trust God's promise—God blesses him anyway
17 Abraham receives God's Law, to live out by faith
18-19 God's presence: blessing for those of faith, judgement for others
20 Abraham fails to trust God's protection—God blesses him anyway

- 21 God's Word protects the line of promise
- 22 Abraham's faith is fulfilled in works
- 23 The promise had always included Sarah
- 24 God's Word provides Isaac a wife to secure the promise
- 25:1-11 God's promises even overflowed to other earthly blessings

25:12-18 Ishmael

God's promises even overflowed outside the line of promise

25:19-35:29 Isaac

- 25:19-26 God elects Jacob before Jacob and Esau are born
- 25:27-34 Jacob desires God's promise; Esau desires food
- 26:1-11 Isaac repeats Abraham's mistake—God blesses him anyway
- 26:12-35 God's promise provokes opposition
- 27 Jacob lies to get God's promise—God blesses him anyway
- 28 God forces Jacob to trust him alone
- 29-30 Jacob's sin has consequences—God blesses him anyway
- 31 God's Word protects Jacob from problems too severe for him
- 32 Israel wrestles with God, and learns to trust in weakness
- 33 Humility leads to reconciliation between Israel and Esau
- 34 Simeon and Levi live by revenge—God will bless them anyway (i.e. like a younger Jacob used to do)
- 35 At a low point in Israel's life, God brings his Word close again

36:1-43 Esau (the Edomites)

God's promises even overflowed outside the line of promise

37-50 Jacob (the Israelites)

- 37 God's Word of promise provokes opposition even within Israel
- 38 Judah gives into lust—God blesses him anyway
- 39 Joseph resists lust and he faces the punishment Judah deserved
- 40-47 God's Word exalts Joseph and gather's God's Church
- 48-50 God's Word reconciles the family and secures the future

What patterns do you see repeating across the generations in Genesis?