

A Biblical Evaluation of Cloning

By Dr. David A. DeWitt

- **Is cloning a creation of a new kind of life?**
- **Does cloning support evolution?**
- **Is it possible to one day reproduce my soul by cloning?**
- **Is cloning condemned or allowed in the Bible?**

Definition: Cloning is the reproduction of an exact physical copy of a parent organism.

In March 1997, reports emerged about the successful cloning of an adult sheep by the researchers of the Roslin Institute in Edinburgh, Scotland, under the leadership of Dr. Ian Wilmut. "Out of 277 tries, the researchers eventually produced only 24 embryos that survived longer than six days. Of these all died before birth except Dolly" (*Time*, March 10, 1997, page 47). The Scottish team discovered a procedure which is simple enough to be reproduced by any skilled laboratory technician-such as those at most university labs.

What Cloning Is Not

Cloning is NOT the creation of life. This successful experiment is being called by some the creation of a new procedure for generating life. The reality is, cloning is a new way to use the life-producing properties which already exist to generate an exact physical copy of the parent creature (a sheep, in this case).

Cloning is NOT an evolutionary advance. The theory of evolution speculates that new genetic material is somehow developed by natural selection. Cloning uses only existing genetic material which is highly regulated by a researcher in a controlled laboratory. It could never happen in nature.

Cloning does NOT disprove anything in the Bible. The real biblical issue is, Does cloning contradict the moral ethical standards set forth in the Bible?

Cloning does NOT reproduce the soul or spirit. If cloning were established for humans, it would replicate the physical features and mental capacity of the donor parent. As with any newborn, the soul (personality) would be developed by social and cultural interaction and the spirit would be given by God.

What Cloning Is

If cloning were perfected among humans:

1. Any cell would be taken from a donor parent of either sex. (All of our cells contain the complete DNA--the code for building our body.)
2. An egg would be taken from any female, and its nucleus, containing its DNA, would be sucked out, but the cellular machinery necessary to reproduce an embryo would be left.
3. The cells are fused together by electric impulses so that the DNA of the parent cell enters the egg.
4. The egg sees itself as fertilized and begins reproducing the parent DNA.

5. The forming embryo is then placed into the womb of any healthy female until she gives normal birth to a child, who will be an exact copy of the donor parent.

What Does the Bible Say about Cloning?

It is God's job to weave us together in the womb. David wrote, *Thou [God] didst form my inward parts: Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made* (Psalm 139:13-14). Every person is woven together by God. In one sense, cloning is like other forms of genetic engineering, similar to test-tube babies and artificial insemination. The Bible does not say it cannot be done. The question is, How much should we be involved in what, David says is a work of God?

Cloning abandons the natural function of sexual reproduction. Romans 1:26 says, *For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural.* Paul goes on to condemn both male and female homosexuality because it abandons the natural function of heterosexual intercourse as a God-prescribed means of reproduction. The difference between cloning and other genetic engineering is that it abandons the natural means of a sperm and egg uniting to produce a child. With cloning, a single mother, for example, could produce an exact copy of herself with no man at all. Or a woman could replicate her homosexual partner. A man could do the same if he could get (or pay) a woman to bear the implanted embryo clone.

The Mosaic Law states, *You shall not breed together two kinds of your cattle* (Leviticus 19:19), and *None of you shall approach any blood relative of his to uncover nakedness.* Then it includes homosexuality and bestiality. The reason he gives is that it is *lewdness, an abomination, a perversion, and defilement* (18:6, 17, 22-24). To interfere with normal heterosexual breeding seems to be a "perversion" of God's established order.

Cloning replicates sinners. *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23). One motive for human cloning is to replicate talented, intelligent, or successful people. But these are measured by worldly standards, and all these people are simply talented, intelligent, and successful sinners. There is no biblical basis for claiming we need more of these.

Cloning can attempt to interfere with the unknowable plan of God. Solomon wrote, *Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God Who makes all things* (Ecclesiastes 11:5).

Cloning destroys embryos. The present technology destroyed 276 fertilized eggs to get one that lived. If those were humans, that would be tragic.

Questions and Answers

Q: *Is cloning a creation of a new kind of life?*

A: No. Cloning is a form of genetic engineering. It recombines life, it does not create life.

Q: *Does cloning support evolution?*

A: No. Evolution requires new genetic material, cloning uses existing genetic material.

Q: *Is it possible to one day reproduce my soul by cloning?*

A: No. At best (or worst) you could only produce another human being who would grow up with your exact physical features. He or she would not have your personality or spirit.

Q: *Is cloning condemned or allowed in the Bible?*

A: Of course, cloning is not mentioned in the Bible. Each of us has to apply what it does say, and the Bible says that we are not to change the breeding patterns of animals (Leviticus 19:19). For humans, after heterosexual sex with our spouse, we are to look to God alone to form the body produced in the womb.