

Creating Life in the Lab?

by Ken Ham

For scientists who believe life evolved from chemicals, there's a huge push to recreate how that might have happened by attempting to make life in a lab. But no matter how many times they've tried, scientists have not been able to make life from non-living chemicals. As the law of biogenesis states, life always comes from other life. Even if they make life in a lab, scientists would be showing that it took intelligence, not natural processes, to do it!

Dr. Andrew Fabich, a microbiologist and associate professor of biology at Truett McConnell University, recently wrote a guest blog for us on this subject of trying to create life in a lab:

A recent New Scientist video reminded me of an old joke that goes something like this: A team of scientists claimed to have discovered how Adam was made from dirt. So the team of scientists challenged God to a man-making competition. When the scientists began, they went to grab a handful of dirt but were interrupted by God who said, "Go get your own dirt." The punch line in the joke is supposed to highlight that scientists think they have figured out everything and don't need God anymore.

While this can be funny, truth is indeed stranger than fiction. One of the latest trends in science today is to (so-called) build life from scratch. (What this really means is that they're using what God already made to make more things.) One of the more recent advances in biotechnology has been in the field called synthetic biology. The goal of synthetic biology is to synthesize life in a lab. The recent video on New Scientist highlights a particularly intriguing new organism that has an altered genetic code.

Technology has made significant strides to identify the minimal set of genes required for an organism to exist. However, just like everyone else, scientists find themselves in situations where the ability to do something doesn't always mean they should do it. Today's technology is reaching a point where there is a fine line between making technological advancements and trying to disprove God's existence. Of all people who should provide answers, Christians should better understand just what's at stake and how creating life in a lab relates to Genesis.

A recent article in Scientific American heralded a feat accomplished in this new field of synthetic biology. The article pointed out how scientists had genetically engineered a "new" code for a living organism to use. Articles and videos like these are often filled with words like Frankenstein, referring to this engineering at the cellular and molecular levels of life. There is even a kind of bacteria-infecting virus, synthesized in the lab, called Frankenstein.

When the novel Frankenstein was first published in 1818, the church struggled with the idea of a scientist making a human body called Frankenstein's monster. The common person did not know how to receive the concept of Frankenstein, and the church did not provide biblical answers to whether a scientist could create life in a lab or not. Now today's church is looking at something called Frankenstein at the cellular and molecular level.

In the late 1800s, the church faced issues after Darwin popularized the idea that humans are nothing more than pond scum. In trying to provide answers for Darwin and Frankenstein, the church surrendered biblical authority to ideas like millions of years and promoted an attitude of ignorance about creating life in a lab. Today's church is still perceived as confused and antiscience, even though Scripture clearly promotes science and so does the ministry of Answers in Genesis.

What's interesting about these recent advancements in synthetic biology is how the experiments repeatedly confirm what Scripture plainly teaches, namely that every living creature reproduces "after its kind." These scientists also showed that their intelligence - not a random chance accident - "created life" (in reality, they manipulated already existing E. coli bacteria) in a lab; we know that the only way life comes into existence is from another infinite source of life (God has given us some capability to create from pre-existing things, but He is the only one who can create original life from nothing) - which is what Scripture teaches (Genesis 1). Cell theory states

that all life comes from life and that all living things are made of cells. Cell theory works because it is based on infallible biblical principles that cannot be violated.

Observational science always confirms God's Word. Life didn't come from nonlife. It came from the hand of the all-wise, almighty Creator God.