

# OpenTheo

## An Egg Is Not a Chicken, so an Embryo Is Not a Human?

August 25, 2022



### #STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about whether it's possible God doesn't create souls for those who won't be born due to miscarriage, abortion, etc. and how to respond to someone who says, "An egg is not a chicken, so an embryo is not a human."

\* Are souls individually created by God at conception, and if so, is it possible he doesn't create souls for those who won't be born due to miscarriage, abortion, etc.?

\* How would you respond to someone who says, "An egg is not a chicken, so an embryo is not a human"?

### Transcript

I'm Amy Hall, I'm here with Greg Koukl and you're listening to Stand to Reason's #STRask podcast. Hey Greg, you're ready to start on this? I am. Alright, this first question comes from Jason F. A human life begins at conception.

But since we are more than just our bodies, where do our souls come from? Are they specially created by God at conception? And if so, is it possible that in his foreknowledge he doesn't create souls for those who won't be born due to miscarriage, abortion, etc.? Well, this is a profound question and there are basically two positions historically. One is called "Traducianism" and the other one is called "Creationism". Alright? I'll start with "Creationism" because it sounds easier to understand and I guess it is.

And that is that the making of the body is a result of two human beings coming together, but the making of the soul is a special act of denovo creation by God. Okay, so mom and dad make the physical body, but God makes the soul and then in a certain sense pairs it or unites it with the body. Alright? And so the human then is an insold physical self, two substances, a physical substance and a non-physical substance.

And the non-physical substance is the seat of personal identity. The "you" who you are is tied to the non-physical substance because to be absent from the body is to be present from the Lord. So who is absent from the body, the individual who dies and then that

same individual goes to be with the Lord, sans physical body without their physical body.

So we know even though there's a deep union between body and soul, the identity is tied to the soul. So that's the creationist view. That's the Roman Catholic view as I understand it.

Okay? Now I have difficulties with that view because to me at least, and I haven't done a lot of deep research on this, but to me at least it creates a problem for the notion of the fallen nature of the soul. If God creates the soul and the souls of humans are also fallen like the body and we're fully fallen, all of us fallen, then does God create a fallen soul? Well, no, he couldn't do that. He'd be responsible for the fallenness then.

Well then if he has the soul in a certain sense become tainted or fall when it becomes associated or connected with the physical body, well that sounds like Gnosticism, where the material world is evil and then it corrupts our souls and this doesn't make any sense to me. Now it also raises the question for a lot of people, well when does this happen? Because if there's conception and then at some later time the soul is placed in the body or united with the body, then you don't have a full human being at some stage of pregnancy. Okay? And so that raises a question.

Now even if you hold a creationist view, you can still hold that the uniting of the specially created soul is simultaneous with the creation of the genuine new human body at the time of conception. So you don't necessarily have that time jump, but at least the question can be raised at that point. And again my understanding is Catholicism would hold that the soul is there right when the new body is there too, so they don't make this distinction but some people do.

Well when does it get the soul? Philosophically it seems that human beings are united beings and that soul-ish activities can be experienced very very young, like all sensations are soul-ish activities. So if there is a feeling of pain or a hearing of sounds, any kind of conscious activity at all, of course that takes a little brain development somewhere along the line before those things can happen, but those are capacities of the soul that get expressed when the physical body has the capability to manage those capacities of the soul. So a case can be made that the soul, that even the youngest human being in the zygote phase even, is still in soul and the soul is what drives the development, not the physical genes or whatever, uses the genes that uses the physical body.

So now we're in a little bit more complex discussion of this relationship between body and soul. For more detail, the person to go to for that is always JP Morland. It's written a lot on that.

So I'll just reference JP on that and leave that. The other alternative is the alternative I hold, which seems to me to make more sense and explain some things that I was just

talking with somebody about the other, oh it was you on the phone from my cabin in Wisconsin where I'm broadcasting from. Not the cabin, the church, but well men in Wisconsin.

And that is the tradition view is the view that mom and dad make the whole human being. That what mom and dad produce is a full human being and a full human being has two substances joined together. So mom and dad produce the unique body, of course everybody knows pretty much that understands how this works, genetics, etc.

That the body that any human being has is a unique product of the mother and father they had and no other pair of human beings would make the body that they have because of the genetic relationship. On the tradition view, it is the mother and father who produced the soul. So the soul that you have, the person you are, is a unique product of the individual mother and individual father you had and no other human being would make you.

So on that view, it doesn't make sense that God would only put souls in people that wouldn't die young or there's a whole host of different ways that people will cast this out. Maybe he doesn't insult people that or he puts the souls of people who would never believe in him in bodies that are remote from the gospel and it never gets preached. But it doesn't matter because they wouldn't believe anyway and he knew that so he put them in the, that actually doesn't make a lot of sense to me for a number of reasons, though some, you know, right people seem to hold that view.

As a tradition, I don't face that problem. And also I don't face the problem of the fallen of the soul. This just the souls are fallen.

Adam and Eve's soul are fallen with their body. Their selves are fallen and they reproduce after their own kind, which by the way is another textual support in my view, at least, for this tradition view of the origin of the soul. If Adam and Eve are reproducing after their own kind and their kind is an insult body, then they reproduce insult bodies.

And if after the fall their insult bodies are broken, then they reproduce after their kind broken and sold bodies. And that would explain the full fall in this human beings, the impact in their, what the scripture calls the flesh, their carnal or fallen natures that is in some ways. It's in some mysterious way tied to their bodies.

So when you get a resurrection body that changes, there's no, flesh doesn't get resurrected. Good thing, by the way. And it also, but it also explains how souls are just as fallen as bodies.

So to me, there's a, there's less problems, almost like a, you know, an Occam's razor. It's less complicated. It seems straightforward, it makes more sense to me in a very straightforward kind of fashion, doesn't have the other complications of creationism.

But both are respectable views. I don't even know what your view is actually, Amy. So Adam, have we talked about? I've held to, I've held to the same view as you.

I'm, I'm open to hearing arguments for the other view, but even if one takes the idea that God creates the, the soul, I don't see any reason to think that there is some time, there's some point in time when we're incomplete human beings, where we're not, and by incomplete, I don't mean we're not fully developed. I mean, we are not essentially human beings because in essence, human beings are body and soul. Yeah.

Hey, but it doesn't make sense. Yeah. I'm sorry for interrupt.

But do you think of Luke chapter one, John the Baptist in the sixth month of his mother's pregnancy, so he's second trimester is filled with the Holy Spirit and his mother's womb. So he's a fetus. And Jesus at that point is an embryo because right after the conception, Mary's conception of Jesus, she goes immediately, according to Luke, she's the Elizabeth because of the angel told her Elizabeth was pregnant.

And then I'm looking out a window. There's a deer walking by. Sorry.

Oh, you're sure. The distraction chewing on the grass out there. Anyway, the, and, and so, but he's in the, in the presence of Jesus, who is a, is an embryo.

All right. Early first trimester, a couple of weeks, maybe six, I don't know, how long does it take for it to get? It takes a take for it to get to Jerusalem, you know, and how long did she wait to go? But look, it's early yet. Elizabeth says, how is it that the mother of my Lord should come to visit? Not the woman who will be the mother, but the mother of my Lord.

And why was John jumping in her womb for joy? It's because he's in the presence of the Lord. Now, keep in mind, sound, sound, Christology is that Jesus, the incarnation, he's one person and two natures. All right.

And he has a physical nature. He's a human nature and he has a divine nature. All right.

But the, but his divine nature is, is the person, the single person, which is the second person of the Trinity. So if he is the Lord in his mother's womb, when he's an embryo, that means the full individual is there then. Okay.

So which speaks to your point about there isn't this gap of time where you have a part human, full human body with no human soul attached to it. Either with that particular observation, doesn't adjudicate between either view, creationism or, or traditionism. It just makes the point that you were making that from the beginning were whole human beings, regardless of how the soul is generated.

I mean, I have no reason to think otherwise that, that somehow we would be, you know,

there would be a time when we would have no soul. I see no reason to think that because we would not be human. Like if we're, if we're the being that we are, then we have the essential properties of that being.

Yeah. JP Borland has made the point that when someone dies, a corpse is not a human body. And that's why deteriorates.

It is, it is the body of, of a former human or something like that. However, you want to characterize it, but the body is no longer human because the soul is no longer there. You know, and so it's the, the, the humanity of that body has been compromised now because the soul is gone for good and death.

The thing, I just remember the thing we were talking about is just a reflection about how if it turns out that the parents produce the soul, they're at least in principle, there could be a, for lack of a better word, inherited soulish characteristics, just like they're inherited physical characteristics. Now we know the, the operation of genes, how that determines physical characteristics. We don't know how the soul might do that.

Certainly not a physical process. But think about the Bach family, for example, not just Johann Sebastian, but all of his kids and his grandkids and his cousins. There was a flock of these box that were magnificent musicians.

Now if the tradition view is true, then, then the very gifted parents in this I take as muse, beautiful, the ability to make beautiful music is a soulish quality. You're not going to find this in chemistry and physics and molecules and brain matter or anything like that. Of course, those things are used to manifest the soul's capability, but it's those things are not resident in the physical stuff.

This is a soulish capacity. And it may be then what explains that is not, not so much nurture, but nature, that all of these individuals had inherited some capacity like their parents and grandparents. Certainly nurture had a factor if they're being raised in musical homes as well, but there has to be something to nurture in the nature to produce the magnificent music that this whole family produced over time.

Just a thought. Let's go to a question from Chris Brooks. What would you say to an egg is not a chicken, so an embryo is not a human? I'm not pausing because I don't know how to answer this.

I'm trying to find the right language. This is exactly parallel to an acorn is not an oak. The problem in both cases is that the language is not adequate to understand essences and natures.

An acorn, let's just use the acorn or an oak for example, when people use the word oak, they are generally referring to the tree like in their yard. There that tree, that's an oak. An acorn is not that thing, but what an oak is, is a kind of living thing.

It has an oak nature and it has its oak nature no matter what stage of development it's at. So an acorn is not an oak tree, but it is an oak with the capacity to become mature in a stage where it's a tree, a mature tree. But the acorn is an oak when it sprouts, it's a sprouted oak.

When it has a slender chute coming up, it is an oak chute. When it gets older, it is an oak sapling and when it's like years old, it's 50 years old, it's an oak tree. It's an oak all throughout.

And by the way, it is the same oak. It isn't a different oak. It's the same oak.

This oak tree has been sitting in my yard since my grandfather planted it. This same oak tree has been there all these time, even though it started out as an acorn. Okay.

So when you have the chicken. Now here, this is where the words are troublesome. Okay.

The egg, if it is not fertilized, is not a chicken. It is an egg, an ovum. All right.

If it is fertilized, then it is a chicken. If you think of the chicken as the individual organism type, but it isn't at the stage of development that we normally identify as a chicken, the thing running around in the yard with the wings and the feathers and all that other stuff. Okay.

So the word chicken often, generally, when we say it, we're talking about the mature stage of development. But the same thing applies with this chicken, this bird, this kind of bird, this kind of living thing as to the oak. It is the same individual that is itself through every stage of development.

So if the egg in question here is fertilized, then it is a chicken. There's a chicken in there eating away at the oak using the, oh, you know how that all works. I don't have to get in the physiology, but, and so you know, you didn't have twins too.

I once, that was up here in Wisconsin again, I cracked three eggs into the frying pan and every one of them was a double yolk. I got a picture of it. Okay.

So I had sex toplets. Well, no, I guess they're a separate egg. So I had three sets of twins, frying in my frying pan.

So had they been fertilized, they would have, they were in six chickens just at the earliest stages of development. And that is the problem with this. Like you said, Greg, sometimes people will use the acorn oak example, egg chicken, same thing.

What's happening here is that people are confusing the stage of development language with the type of being language. So the stage of development is embryonic chicken and adult chicken. So embryonic and adult and the type of being language is the chicken.

Yes. If you want to use that, I'm trying to think if there's another word to use, but there's a, maybe there's official, whatever, but scientific characterization, but right. So an embryonic chicken is not an adult chicken, but they're both chickens.

Right. Because you're, you, you, and this is where people make the mistake. They just confuse the stage of development questions.

So when we're talking about human beings, what I like to do instead of saying fetus, I'll say fetal human being, fetal human. So it's clear that I'm not talking about a different thing. I'm just talking about a different stage of development.

Right. So we can talk about a fetal human. We can talk about a newborn human.

We can talk about, talk about an adult human. Right. They're all humans at different stages.

So if you, somebody says, well, it's just a fetus. The question is what kind of fetus is it? It's a human fetus. Acorn is a seed.

What kind of seed is it? It's an oak seed. So this, this helps you to zero in on the nature issue, which is the heart of the issue here when we're talking about abortion. What is the thing itself? Yeah.

So in that case, what, yeah, it's a fetal what? Fatal is just describing a stage. Yeah. So what is it exactly? Yeah.

I think it, it's hard for people to make this connection. I've had these conversations and they're so used to thinking of it as a different thing that it can take a while to get, to get this concept through to them. But if you keep explaining, you know, it's not a newborn, it's not an adult, it's a fetus.

It's just a stage of development. Right. It's not a different thing.

Well, there's another thing to do, to go to here. And that is these are the kind of conversations you have with people who are belligerent regarding the issue of abortion. If that exact same person, that same woman that is making this point were to get pregnant, she would want the baby and the, she wasn't guarding pro choice turf at all.

She would immediately be identifying the baby, the child, the one inside her, the separate one she's carrying that she's nurturing or whatever. It's obviously her child. And they bear testimony, we're pregnant.

What does that mean? We're with child. That's what the phrase means to be with child, regardless of the stage of development. They are with child child being the designation of a young human being at all those stages.

So all those early stages. So this isn't, there's nothing tricky going on here. We all know this.

You know, when people say my body, my choice, when that person using that slogan gets pregnant, and somebody, and she's in her, let's say her first trimester or second trimester, people will say, Hey, how's your body? They say, how's your baby? They say, how's your body? She didn't say my body's doing fine. And my baby's doing fine is what she's going to add to make the distinction clear. This is common sense.

It's amazing how we human beings are capable of deceiving ourselves, I think. And because I think this is fairly clear, but if you want to not see it, there are a lot of things that you can say to try and avoid the truth of the matter. Right.

Well, I hope that helps you out, Chris and Jason. Thank you for listening. If you have a question, send it to us on Twitter with the hashtag #strask.

This is Amy Hall and Greg Cockel for Stand to Reason.

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