



Systematic Theology: Anthropology

When the psalmist David gazed upon the heavens and contemplated the majesty of God's creation, he was moved to exclaim: "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth! When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; what is man that You are mindful of him?" This fundamental question has echoed through the ages, challenging humanity to understand its place in the cosmos and its relationship with the divine Creator.

The Eternal Question: What is Man?

Philosophical Perspectives

Throughout history, philosophers have offered various answers to this profound question. Materialists reduce humanity to "thinking animals" or products of random evolution. Pascal contemplated man's position "between infinity and nothingness." Descartes proclaimed "I think, therefore I am," while others have described humans as merely "improved apes" or "bundles of neurons."

These reductionist views fail to capture the true essence and dignity of human nature as revealed in Scripture.

The Biblical Response

In stark contrast to human speculation, the Word of God provides the definitive answer: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth... Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.'"

This divine declaration establishes the foundation for true anthropological understanding.

Biblical vs. Human Anthropology

Human Anthropology

Exalts evolutionary theory and natural selection. Views humans as products of random chance and material processes. Denies divine intervention in human origins. Reduces humanity to purely biological functions.

Biblical Anthropology

Grounded in God's Word and divine revelation. Affirms special creation by divine design. Recognizes humanity's unique status as image-bearers of God. Maintains human dignity and purpose.

The Christian who believes in divine revelation must never waver before materialist arguments that contradict faith in God and His Word. Scripture provides the only reliable foundation for understanding human nature and origin.



The Six Days of Creation

To properly situate humanity within God's creative plan, we must understand the magnificent sequence of creation as recorded in Genesis. Each day reveals the progressive unfolding of divine wisdom and power.

Days One Through Three: Foundation

01

Day One

God created cosmic light, separated light from darkness, and established day and night. The supernatural "fiat lux" ignited the first luminous energy of the universe.

02

Day Two

God created an expanse in the midst of the waters, separating waters above and below, forming the heavens.

03

Day Three

God gathered the waters into seas, caused dry land to appear called Earth, and commanded the earth to produce vegetation, seed-bearing plants, and fruit trees.

Days Four Through Six: Completion

01

Day Four

God created the luminaries for signs and seasons - two great lights: the sun to rule the day, the moon to rule the night, and the stars.

02

Day Five

God commanded the waters to produce marine life and created birds to fly in the heavens, including great sea creatures.

03

Day Six

God commanded the earth to produce living creatures according to their kinds - livestock, creeping things, and beasts of the earth. Then came the crowning act: the creation of man.

The Origin of Man: A Special Creation

The creation of humanity stands apart from all other creative acts. While other beings emerged through divine command ("Let there be..."), the creation of man involved divine counsel and special attention.

"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.'"





The Divine Council in Creation

The use of the plural "Let Us make" indicates that the Creator was not alone in humanity's creation. This solemn moment represents the Trinity - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - united in creating a being that would revolutionize all creation.

While scholars debate the precise meaning of this plural form, the text clearly indicates the extraordinary significance of human creation. This was not merely another creative act, but the culmination of God's creative work - a being fashioned to bear the divine image.

Image and Likeness of God

Imago Dei

The phrase "in Our image, according to Our likeness" represents one of the most profound concepts in Scripture. In Genesis 1:26-30, we discover three fundamental aspects of humanity created in God's image:

Spiritual Being

Capable of immortality and spiritual communion with the divine

Moral Being

Possessing the likeness of God in righteousness and holiness

Rational Being

Endowed with reason, intelligence, and governmental capacity

Historical Perspectives on the Divine Image

Early Church Fathers

Ireneus and Tertulian distinguished between image (corporeal aspects) and likeness (spiritual characteristics). Origen and Clement of Alexandria disagreed, viewing image as inherent human characteristics and likeness as God-derived qualities.

Reformers and Scholastics

Reformed theologians generally saw no distinction between image and likeness. Scholastics expanded the concept to include intellect, reason, and freedom, with likeness as a supernatural gift controlling humanity's lower nature.

Understanding Image and Likeness

The theological discussion regarding the meaning of God's image in humanity reveals various perspectives, yet Scripture itself provides clarity. Genesis 1:26 uses both terms: "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness." However, verse 27 only repeats "image," suggesting this is the central concept.

❏ Berkhof affirmed: "The words 'image' and 'likeness' are employed as synonyms and one by the other, and therefore do not refer to two different things."

The text emphasizes that both male and female were created in God's image, indicating this refers to human nature itself - the essential quality that makes us human and distinct from all other creatures.



Humanity's Distinction from Animals

The qualitative difference between humans and animals transcends any materialistic view of human nature. The Human Genome Project revealed only a 5% difference between human and chimpanzee DNA, yet this small percentage encompasses vast qualitative distinctions.

How can such minimal genetic variance produce such profound differences in reasoning, language, creativity, and spiritual capacity? The answer lies not in material composition but in the divine breath that makes humans living souls bearing God's image.

Natural Likeness with God



Personhood

Humans are persons as God is a Person. This likeness exists in the spirit, in personal nature – an inalienable similarity that endures regardless of spiritual condition.



Rational Faculty

The capacity for self-knowledge, environmental awareness, and God-consciousness, combined with the ability to determine moral choices and purposes.



Emotional Nature

The ability to experience love, joy, sorrow, and the full spectrum of emotions that reflect divine attributes in finite form.

Moral Likeness with God

In humanity's original state, Adam and Eve possessed moral likeness with God - sinlessness, holiness, wisdom, love, and the power to choose righteousness. This moral dimension enabled personal communion with God, including moral obedience and complete fellowship.

Langston observed: "Man was created good. All his tendencies were good. All the sentiments of his heart inclined toward God, and in this consisted his moral likeness with the Creator."

This moral likeness was damaged but not destroyed by the Fall, leaving traces in human conscience and the universal search for transcendent meaning.



The Inner Moral Law

Universal Conscience

Romans 2:14-15 reveals that even Gentiles without written law demonstrate "the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness."

Divine Standard Required

Since the heart is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9), humanity needs an external standard. God's Word serves as the lamp and light for moral guidance, with divine perfection as the ultimate standard.

Male and Female He Created Them

The distinction between male and female is fundamental to understanding God's design for humanity. This differentiation establishes the foundation for marriage, procreation, and the complementary nature of human relationships.

Genesis 1:27 declares: "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." This divine design refutes attempts to redefine human sexuality contrary to Scripture.

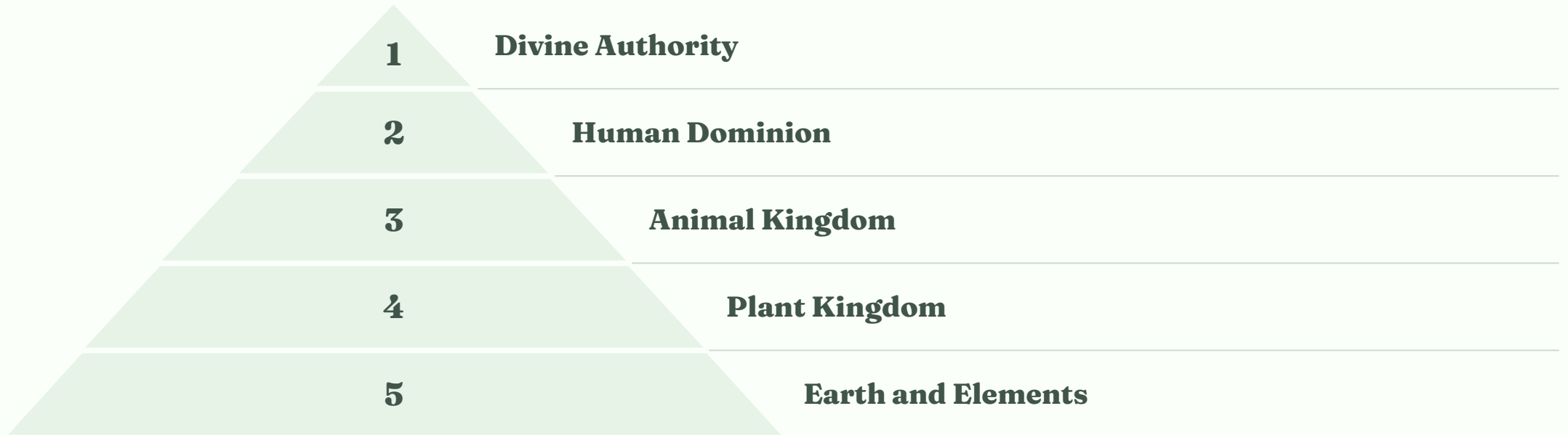


God's Blessing for Fruitfulness

"Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'"

God's plan included human reproduction through the union of male and female within marriage. This command preceded the Fall, demonstrating that procreation was part of God's original design, not a consequence of sin.

Dominion and Stewardship



Humanity was created to exercise godly dominion over creation. This governmental capacity required intellectual ability to reason, organize, plan, and evaluate; emotional capacity for wisdom and care; and volitional capacity to choose righteousness and obey divine commands.



The Formation of Man

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7).

This verse reveals God's special method in creating humanity - not through mere divine command, but through deliberate formation and the impartation of divine breath.

From the Dust of the Earth

God did not create man from clay in its crude state, but from the chemical elements found in earth's soil. Through supernatural process, God extracted and combined these elements to form the human body with its remarkable complexity.

- Of the 106 chemical elements known in nature, 26 are found in the human body. Job's insight was scientifically accurate: "Remember, I pray, that You have made me like clay" (Job 10:9).

Recent NASA research confirmed that clay contains all chemical elements necessary for life, supporting the biblical account of human formation from earth's elements.

The Breath of Life

After forming the physical body, God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." This divine breath distinguished human creation from animal creation.

While animals were simply commanded to exist, humanity received direct divine inbreathing - the impartation of spiritual life that connected the material body with the immaterial soul and spirit.



Chafer noted: "That breath of God was the bestowal of spirit, which was as far removed from other forms of life as God is distant from His creation."



The Garden of Eden

"Then the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed" (Genesis 2:8). Eden means "pleasure" or "delight" - a fitting name for humanity's first dwelling place.

This perfect environment provided everything needed for human flourishing: beautiful surroundings, abundant food, meaningful work, and most importantly, direct communion with the Creator who walked in the garden during the cool of the day.

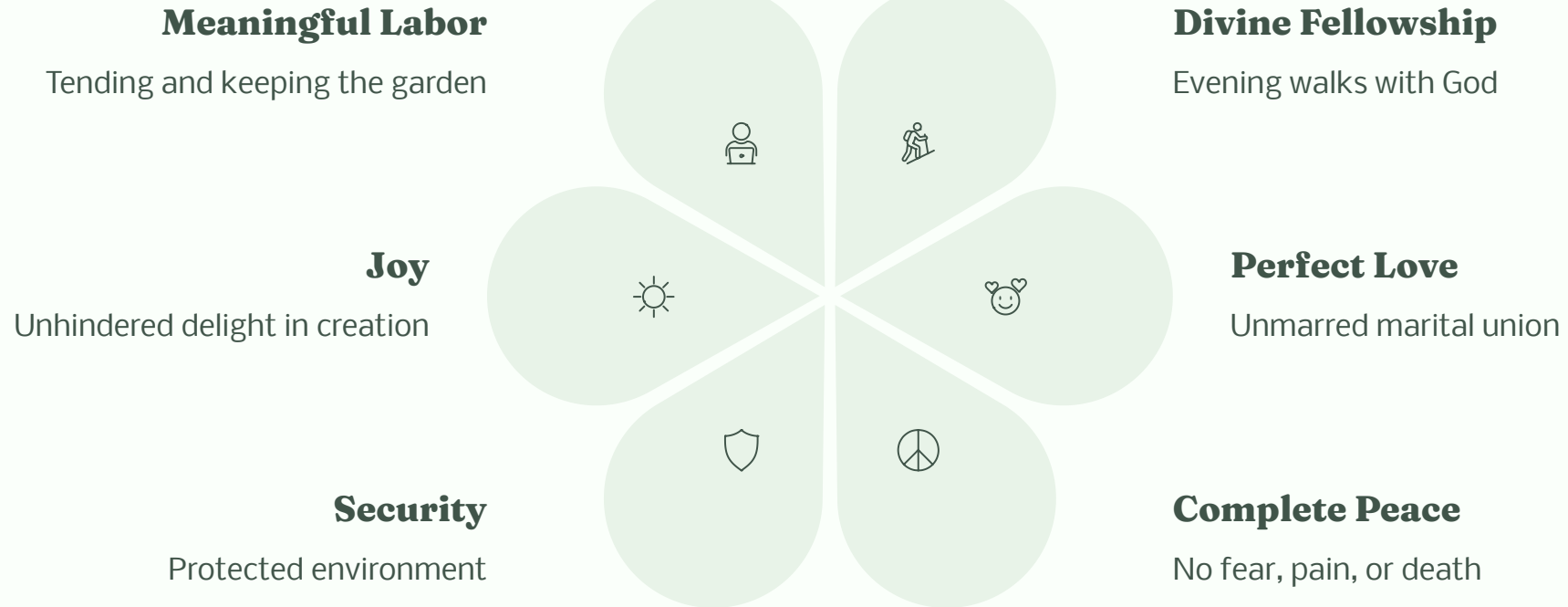
The Formation of Woman

"And the Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him'" (Genesis 2:18). Recognizing Adam's need for companionship, God performed the first divine surgery.

"And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man."

Adam's joyful response revealed his recognition of this perfect complement: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

Life in Paradise



The Fall of Humanity

The harmony of Paradise was shattered when Satan, the rebellious cherub cast down to earth, targeted God's masterpiece - humanity. The enemy's attack came through deception, appealing to human autonomy and the desire for forbidden knowledge.

Rather than honoring God's single prohibition regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Eve chose to listen to the serpent's lies, and Adam chose to follow her into disobedience.



Correcting Misconceptions about the Fall

Not Sexual Union

The Fall was not related to marital intimacy. God commanded multiplication before sin entered, and marriage is honored throughout Scripture as God's design.

Not an Apple

Scripture never identifies the forbidden fruit as an apple. This misunderstanding stems from tradition rather than biblical text. The specific fruit type remains unknown.

The True Nature of the Fall

God's command was clear: "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17).

The forbidden tree served as a test of human freedom and obedience. Rather than appreciating God's abundant provision, humanity focused on the single restriction and chose rebellion over submission to divine authority.



Consequences of the Fall

1

Spiritual Death

Immediate separation from God, loss of innocence and moral purity

2

Physical Corruption

Bodies became subject to disease, aging, and eventual death

3

Environmental Curse

Creation subjected to futility, thorns and thistles, difficult labor

4

Relational Breakdown

Conflict between humans, disrupted harmony with creation

5

Universal Impact

Sin entered the world, affecting all subsequent humanity

The Promise of Redemption

Even in the moment of judgment, God's grace shone forth with the first messianic promise. Speaking to the serpent, God declared: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel" (Genesis 3:15).

This protoevangelium - the first gospel - promised that from woman's seed would come One who would deliver crushing defeat to Satan, though at great personal cost.



Redemption: Planned, Promised, and Realized

Planned in Eternity

1

"Christ was foreknown before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20)

2

Promised in Eden

Immediate declaration of coming victory through woman's seed

Realized in Christ

3

"When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son" (Galatians 4:4)

God's redemptive plan was not an emergency response to human failure, but the eternal purpose of divine love working through human history to restore fallen humanity.

The Constitution of Human Beings

Spirit, Soul, and Body

Understanding human nature requires examining Scripture's revelation of our tripartite composition. "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

This verse clearly identifies three distinct yet integrated aspects of human nature, each with specific functions and characteristics.

Theories of Human Constitution

Unitarianism (Monism)

Views humans as indivisible units with no surviving soul or spirit after death.
Reduces humanity to purely physical existence.

Dichotomism

Recognizes only material and immaterial parts, treating soul and spirit as synonymous terms for the same reality.

Trichotomism

Affirms three distinct components - body, soul, and spirit - each with specific functions in human experience and relationship with God.



The Human Spirit

The spirit represents the highest aspect of human nature - that part which communes directly with God. It is through the spirit that humans possess God-consciousness and can worship "in spirit and truth."

Paul spoke of the "inward man" that delights in God's law (Romans 7:22), distinguished from the "outward man" that experiences physical decay while the inner man is renewed daily (2 Corinthians 4:16).

The Human Soul

Biblical Terminology

Hebrew: *nephesh*

Greek: *psyche*

The soul serves as the seat of personality, emotions, and conscious experience. It bridges the spiritual and physical aspects of human nature.

Soul Functions

- Emotional expression (sadness, joy)
- Personal identity and consciousness
- Connection between spirit and body
- Center of human personality

Theories of Soul Origin

1

Preexistence Theory

Claims souls exist in spiritual spheres before entering bodies. This spiritist doctrine lacks biblical foundation and contradicts Scripture's teaching about human origin and the nature of sin.

2

Creationist Theory

Proposes God directly creates each soul at conception or birth. Supported by passages like Ecclesiastes 12:7 and Zechariah 12:1.

3

Participatory Theory

Suggests divine cooperation with natural processes - God creates the soul while parents generate the body, working together in forming complete human beings.



The Human Body

Far from being merely material housing for the soul, the human body is integral to human nature and bears tremendous spiritual significance. Through the body, the soul communicates with the external world and expresses the inner life.

David marveled at bodily formation: "I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works" (Psalm 139:14).

The Marvel of Human Physiology

206

Bones

Forming the skeletal framework

1T

Brain Cells

Processing information at
incredible speed

200

Hormones

Regulating bodily functions

50M

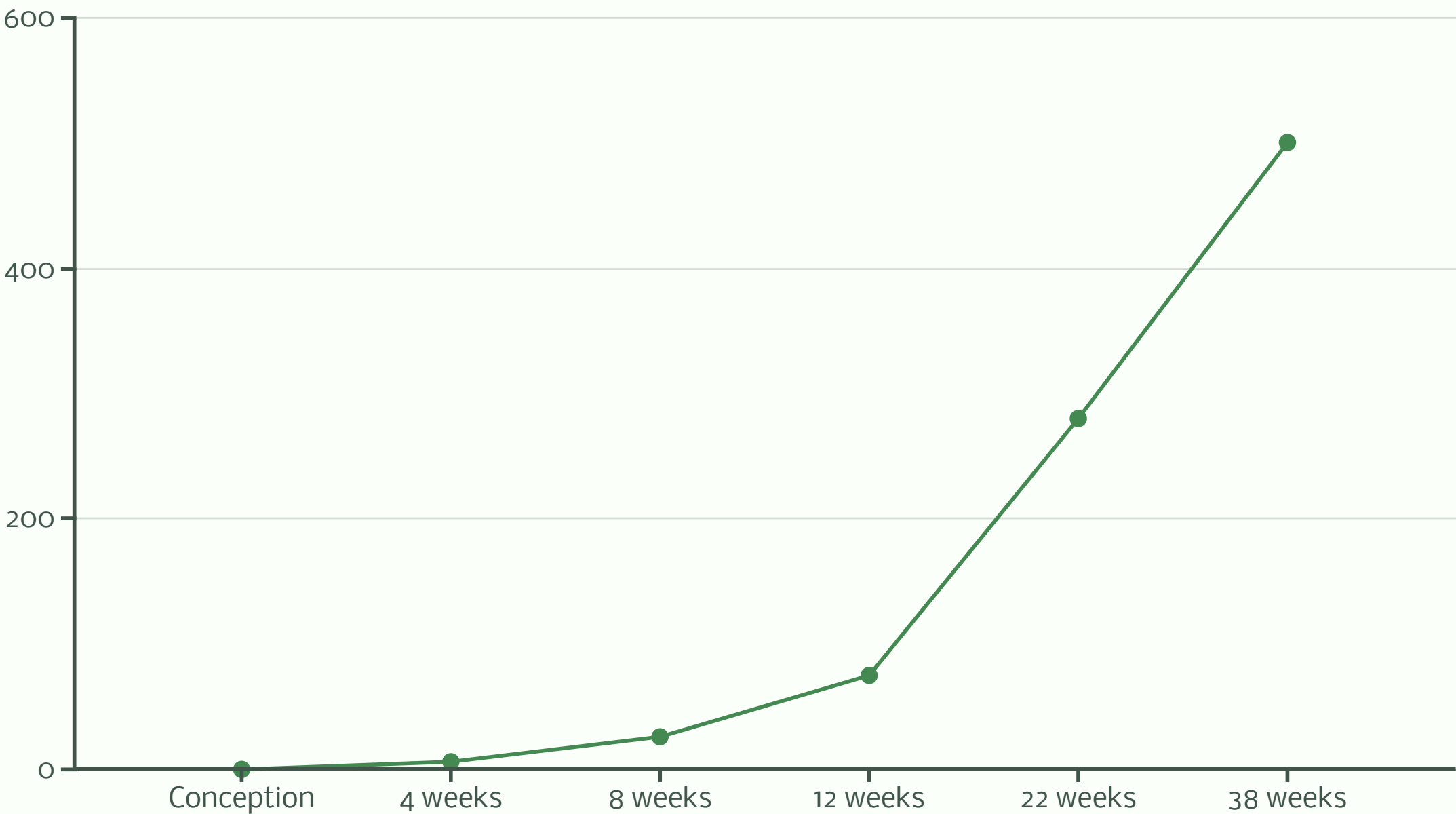
Smell Receptors

Detecting countless odors

These statistics reveal merely glimpses of the body's astounding complexity - a complexity that declares divine design rather than random evolution.

The Miracle of Human Reproduction

The development of human life from conception demonstrates God's incredible creative power working through natural processes. From a single fertilized cell containing 46 chromosomes, an entire human being develops with all genetic characteristics predetermined.



The Spiritual Dimension of the Body



Body of Sin

The old nature that uses physical members as instruments of unrighteousness before conversion



Temple of the Holy Spirit

The believer's body as the dwelling place of God's Spirit, requiring holy living



Earthly Tabernacle

The temporary dwelling of the soul and spirit during earthly pilgrimage



Future Glorification

The promised transformation into a glorious, incorruptible resurrection body

The Resurrection of the Body

The ultimate destiny of redeemed humanity involves not merely spiritual existence, but the resurrection of glorified physical bodies. Paul teaches that our mortal bodies will be raised incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and spiritual (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

For believers, this promises transformation into bodies like Christ's resurrection body. For unbelievers, resurrection unto judgment awaits. The Christian hope encompasses the entire person - spirit, soul, and body - redeemed and glorified for eternity.

"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body" (Philippians 3:20-21).

