

Are You as Smart as Salmon?

A few years ago, my family and I were able to visit the wonderful state of Washington for the first time. Among the many amazing things to see there, are the famous Pike Place Market, the Space Needle, Mount Saint Helens, and the Ballard Locks. The Ballard Locks was especially interesting. These locks sit at the west end of Salmon Bay, Seattle. Their purpose is to prevent the mixing of seawater with the freshwater of the lakes. They also serve as an elevator for boats traveling from the freshwater to the saltwater (and vice versa).

Integrated into the locks is a fish ladder. This fish ladder helps with the migration of anadromous fish, notably salmon. Once the salmon hatch in lakes, rivers or streams, they migrate to the sea, and then towards the end of their lives, they return to the freshwater (where they were born) to spawn. Simply put, the fish ladder allows a way of passage for adult salmon to move from saltwater to freshwater so they can continue their life cycle. If it weren't for the fish ladder, these salmon would eventually die off because they wouldn't be able to go back home to reproduce.

At the Ballard Locks, there is a place where you can view these fish as they pass through the ladder (the months of July and August are said to be the prime months to witness this). After spending much of their life in the sea, amazingly they are able to find their way to the ladder. They pass through it and return to where they were born. These salmon are so intelligent that they can remember their true home and even find their way back there before attempting to reproduce.

What about us? Are we as smart as salmon? Like salmon, do we understand where we come from and where we are going? These are things that God expects us to know.

- God expects us to know where we come from. He expects us to know that we are His creation. We are His greatest creation. Unlike salmon or any other animal, God created us in His image (Genesis 1:26-27).
- Part of being made in the image of God means that we have eternity within us. It means that we have an eternal soul that will live on in eternity somewhere once it departs from this earthly body (Ecclesiastes 12:7; 2 Corinthians 5:1-10).
- It also means that we have free-moral agency. Unlike animals, we can choose right from wrong. We can either choose to serve God and enjoy His blessings or choose to rebel against God and experience terrible consequences (Joshua 24:14-15). The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was placed in the Garden of Eden so that the very first man and woman (Adam and Eve) could exercise this marvelous ability (Genesis 2:15-17).

All of this means that God made us special. He made us unique and superior to anything else. Do we appreciate this? If so, then we need to acknowledge it by living our lives every day serving our Creator and bringing Him glory (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). God being our Creator means He has the inherent right to tell us what to do, and we must obey the instructions He has given.

God also expects us to know where we are going after this life. Do you know this? The Bible says you can! *"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know*

that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:13).

Notice how the Apostle John knew where he was going after this life. We can as well! When we obey the gospel, we can KNOW that we are right with God and on the path to be with Him for eternity. Unlike salmon, we are going to live on after this life. Unlike salmon, we are pursuing something more than an earthly home (John 14:1-6).

While it was fascinating to see salmon travel through the fish ladder back to where they were born, unfortunately only a few ever make it that far. Of the hundreds and hundreds that spent their adult lives at sea, only a relatively small number make it back home. Most are eaten by predators or fall for the bait of fishermen. But hopefully, we can learn from those who do make it back. Hopefully, we can be at least as smart as they are and always remember who we are and where we are going.