

United by Christ Shown in the Shadow of Swarms

Isaiah 6:1-3

I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."

The whole earth is full of His glory! He is the Creator, everything that was made was created by the Word and is declaring Him in some way. Jesus commanded us to look at nature, in order to understand His kingdom. *Matthew 6:26* “**Behold** the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?” That word “behold” is a command. As we consider the wonders of nature and His creation, we continually see not only Christ Himself, His nature, power and wonder, but also His eternal plan. This paper will present one tiny aspect of the Lord and His body as seen in swarms of fish.

Definitions to be understood as a foundation for this sharing:

Swarms

Swarm describes a behavior of a group of animals of similar size and body orientation, often moving en masse in the same direction. "Swarming" is a general term that can be applied to any animal that swarms. The term can be applied to insects, birds, fish, various microorganisms such as bacteria, and people. (Taken from Wikipedia)

Lateral Line

A lateral line is a sense organ fish use to detect movement and vibration in the surrounding water. They use it to detect depth/water pressure, prey, predators, sense current movement and orientation in the current, as well as to avoid collisions. It essentially is a form of eyes, ears and sensory feelings combined into one organ. All fish have some form of a lateral line, some having a more developed one than others. Lateral lines are usually visible as faint lines running lengthwise down each side, from the vicinity of the gill covers to the base of the tail. Sometimes parts of the lateral organ are modified into electroreceptors, which are organs used to detect electrical impulses. It is possible that vertebrates, such as sharks, use the lateral organs to detect magnetic fields as well. Most amphibian larvae and some adult amphibians also have a lateral organ.

The Purpose of Swarming

In this discussion we will look at fish swarms, specifically anchovies. We recognize anchovies as tiny, canned fish, but though as individual they are a weak, miniscule part of the oceanic ecosystem, when they swarm together – or unite as one – they become a beautiful picture of the body of Christ.

Like most fish they have an internal organ that helps them track their neighbors in order to stay in formation. It's called a "lateral Line" and is like a series of hidden ears that run the length of the body. It detects tiny movements of other fish in the school and allows them to co-ordinate their movements. It also allows them to detect predators.

When fish are in a swarm chemical signals govern the swarm. When a member detects danger it releases pheromones to warn the others. The sailfish is the fastest fish in the sea, but it's still difficult for it to take a swarm by surprise because the fish stand united. The sailfish' game plan: divide and conquer. They slice through the masses and break them into smaller groups, so they are easier targets. But even then only the weak or diseased get taken. The fragmented school will always try to re-unite with the massive swarm. Alone these small fish would be easy prey, but together they become more than the sum of their parts. They become a single, powerful swarm.

The Body of Christ is a Swarm!

The many-membered body of Christ is made up of small, weak individuals who are joined together by the cross – death, burial and resurrection, to form one powerful unit that becomes "more than the sum of their parts". The Spirit of Christ in us is like the lateral line. It is an internal organ, like many ears, that allow us to detect the heavenly body, and the mind of Christ that we might be governed by the head. We not only receive brain waves as individuals, but we hear the movements of others, we discern the body that we might flow together with purpose.

Nothing seen in the universe is a random gathering of cells. Stars hanging in the sky are not the same as a universe fitly joined together, flowing in an orbit which exists only by an inner magnetism that draws the planets together.

Cells are not individuals living for themselves, but are joined together with a purpose to make organs. Some cells make skin or the brain that governs each living creature. They are not just gathered together, but they are formed, fashioned together to make up something greater than themselves. Everything is organized down to the molecular level for a living organism to live and move and have it's being!

We are "members fitly set", organized and joined in a very scientific faction. We are not just people gathered into one physical space, or joined by certain beliefs; we are a planned-out small part of something so much bigger than ourselves! We are the smallest level of a creation that has minute detailed functions. We are the body of Christ, meant to be the vessel to carry out the functions of the brain, of His will, His mind. Here is nothing hodge-podge about it. There is not just a gathering inside a church on Sundays, there is not even on a greater scale of ministries that do flow with a purpose, there is something so full of organic life, it is joined by an inner nature. Like the school of fish, there is something drawing us together into this body a lot more than beliefs, or scheduled meetings! There is a chemical, an organ inside of our bodies, a NATURE, that

allows us to detect other members and gather together as one. The Holy Spirit is the magnetism in each of us to draw us together in Christ!!!

The enemy has the same tactics: to divide and conquer. He uses our whole earth life to divide us from one another, to deafen the inner ear that will constantly try to re-unite with the rest of the “swarm” so we are an easier target. He uses hurts, other people’s sinful nature to do it. He uses bitterness, envy, jealousy, all the fruits of our flesh, all the fruits from the eating of that seed from the knowledge of good and evil to divide us. But when that happens, we still do try to re-unite the swarm back together. That way we become the powerful school of fish, instead of one tiny, helpless, fish food for the sharks!

Orcas or killer whales are another example of a species that lives in community. Sons and daughters never leave their mother’s side. Their pods have extended families that they communicate with, aunts, uncles, and cousins!! They use sonar signals to greet one another, share fishing tips, and stay in a group. If only one Orcas catches a seal at feeding time, every member of the pod will get an equal share. They co-operatively share meals, dividing out to each member an equal portion. When they are taken into captivity their dorsal fin immediately goes limp and never again become erect. Even those born in captivity, are born with a limp fin. No scientist can give a valid explanation for why this is. Could it be their internal ears, their lateral line, has no purpose? It has been cut off from it’s freedom of community, it has been separated from the other members of it’s greater whole, the many-member body and that affects this species? I believe that happens to us. If we are living for ourselves we are in captivity. We are enslaved, and cut-off from the land of the free. When we lose our sense of purpose, and the life-long journey of discovering this huge swarm we’re part of our fin, our zest, our joy goes limp.

When we lose sight of the eternal realities of the risen Christ, we are of all men most miserable! But there is no stopping us when we unite together as one in Christ, when we stand on what is true in Christ, when we become the body that we are in the risen Christ.

Ephesians 4:15-17 “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”