"Mirrors"

* By Tony Harriman

It seems to me that any discussion on the topic of light has to include at least a mention of mirrors. Mirrors quite cleverly reflect images in the form of light waves.

Mirrors, in effect, are curious things. When we look at ourselves in a mirror, we see everything about us reflected horizontally. Our left shoulder now looks like our right shoulder, and so on. Because of the way our eyes work in our heads, the mirror does not reflect our image vertically; in other words, we don’t see our head where our feet should be, etc.

As common as modern domestic mirrors are, the earth actually survived a long time without them, relying largely on buffed-up metal surfaces. The foil-backed glass and plastics that comprise what we generally think of when we think of mirrors actually show up almost everywhere:

* Vehicles
* CDs (Compact Discs)
* Cameras
* Telescopes
* Security Systems
* Public Restrooms

To name just a few.

In common mirrors the reflective surface is applied behind the glass, and a very faint second image is produced by the reflection of the glass surface itself; the reason being that a very slight refraction is caused by the light passing twice through the glass surface of the mirror. Mirrors which are to be used in astronomical telescopes are either produced using highly-polished metal, or have the mirrored surface applied to the front surface of the glass, or whatever substrate is to be used.

"Our moon is as bright as it is because it reflects light from our sun"

All of the planets and moons in our solar system have no light of their own; the only reason we see them as they shine at night (and sometimes during early evening and morning, as does Venus) is because their surfaces act like mirrors, and the light of our sun reflects off of them. Our moon is as bright as it is because it reflects light from our sun. Though a very dim representation, the moon and planets are in a sense acting as mirrors; there's no high definition of images, but definitely lots of light.

I once read an article about a mirror which had been set up on the moon, and which pointed at earth. The purpose being that a beam of light may be sent to the moon, and its speed measured by how long the beam took to return. That's the simple version; but it took some clever, engineering minds to work it out.

Mirrors really are everywhere in the natural world, from the still, calm surface of a lazy summer lake, to the northern harbors of North America; in fact, just about every body of water -- large or small -- offers itself as a reflector of something in the distance. Even the lowly puddle will look back at you if you look into it. Some liquids, such as mercury, will cast a gorgeous reflection; some of you may remember that all thermometers contained mercury before it came to be recognized as a toxic substance -- hence the expression, "the mercury is rising," meant that summer was coming. Mercury's molecular structure is so dense that its surface is super smooth looking just like a silver mirror.

"As you approach the puddle, it disappears"

Here's an interesting observation: most of us know what a mirage is. A mirage, in simple terms, is what appears to be a reflection off of the atmosphere showing objects and events which exist perhaps many miles beyond where the reflection of them is actually seen. A real curious phenomenon which many times I have promised myself I would investigate further is that of reflections which may be seen on hot road surfaces. The phenomenon I'm referring to is the one that makes the road look like there's a huge puddle of water in the distance in front of you as you drive. As you approach the puddle, it disappears. What's really curious about this is that the puddle of water ... which isn't really there ... reflects objects which are beyond itself, so that you may see the colors of distant signposts, or the images of cars traveling toward you. I used to think that, for this oddity to appear, the sun had to be behind you just a little; but these mirrors in the road (mirages) even show up at night, and it seems not to matter whether the air is cold or
hot. In a documentary I watched recently, evidence was presented that the iceberg which sank the Titanic was hidden from the view of the lookouts for a full thirty minutes by a cold water mirage, where the air in front of the ship acted as a lens, masking the deadly iceberg with a reflected image from a long way away. I'm seriously going to have to investigate this a little further.

Some other time I suppose someone should raise the discussion of cloaking technology which is designed to bend light around an object, making it appear that the object is not there at all. But not right now.

"Jesus very plainly stated that a person who sees Him will be seeing the Father"

Right now, let's consider a spiritual application of the mirror, how will reflected spiritual light from God be seen by those looking at Him through us? Won't people have a distorted view? Won't everything seem backward? Well ... yes - and no. Light from God doesn't come directly from God to us. If I understand my Bible correctly, light from God begins its journey to the human family as a reflection off of the person of Jesus. So if I am acting as a mirror, then by the time the light reaches another soul the adjustment will be made naturally before it reaches that soul, much like a periscope works on a submarine; multiple mirrors are set up so that the image seen is a true picture of what's going on above the surface of the water; turn the periscope left ... and you'll see left. It seems that God had this thought in mind when He made us, since Jesus very plainly stated that a person who sees Him will be seeing the Father. It would seem, then, that our responsibility as those who see God through Jesus, should spend our energies turning others to Jesus so that they may see the Father for themselves. The Father, of course, probably doesn't need an elaborate setup of spiritual mirrors to communicate with us, any more than a computer would need its data streamed in back to front. But because I am a believer in the idea that all created things are telling us something about their Creator, I have to stop and wonder what is being taught by the concept of the mirror.

Reflecting the light of God appears often to be an involuntary action on the part of human beings. Though the meaning is not fully understood, mankind has been made in the image of God. In our frame appears to be the ability to, not only act as prisms giving definition to the light shining in and out of us, but also to reflect the light off of us. God has made us so, and there is probably very little we can do about it. I imagine we could be an excellent surface in the service of God, off of which He might fully shine ... if we'd just keep still and cooperate. I'm reminded of a verse, "Be STILL and KNOW that I am God."

There is another avenue we might travel as we explore the mirror phenomenon; and that's the avenue down which we may consider the idea of God actually hiding His people from those who would do them harm at the close of the world's history.

"The senses of human beings were either closed or opened as the need arose"

Obviously God doesn't need to use smoke and mirrors such as a magician might do; but it would be a big mistake to ignore the very real notion that God has ways of hiding and revealing things from human eyes as He sees fit. To my mind the Bible is full of accounts where the senses of human beings were either closed or opened as the need
arose:

* Elisha's servant had his eyes opened to the reality of an entire army fighting for them (2 Kings 6:17).

* God opened the eyes of Hagar and she saw a well of water (Genesis 21:19).

* God opened the eyes of Balaam (Numbers 22:31).

There are also many accounts of God closing or opening the eyes of perception:

* Isaiah prophesied of the closing of the people's eyes of understanding (Isaiah 29:10).

* Daniel was told that the words he was inquiring about were closed and sealed till the time of the end; so it wouldn't have mattered how clearly the words were explained, Daniel would not have been able to understand them at that time (Daniel 12).

* The eyes of Adam and Eve were opened as they ate the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:7).

So read again the verse: "Be still ...," and picture a moment when God has His hand around you, shielding you from your enemies. You can see them, but they cannot see you. At that moment ... be still ... don't make a sound; because if you do, someone will hear you. Does anyone remember the accounts of Jewish families hiding in the attics and cellars of Samaritans in an attempt to escape the slaughter of the Nazis? Have you ever read books about how the families had to be motionless during the daytime so they wouldn't be heard? God is well able to protect you ... just shut up and be still.

"People in Jerusalem were given a glimpse of an imminent attack"

Josephus, a Bible-times historian, wrote of the siege of Jerusalem in AD 70; he recorded that in the sky were seen images of Roman armies gathering for battle. Obviously the armies weren't in the sky; they were just reflections, supernatural or otherwise. So whatever you want to make of that, you shouldn't miss the fact that people in Jerusalem were given a glimpse of an imminent attack, and if they were going to get out, now was the time to do it. And many did ... and lived to tell the tale.

Just a snippet of an observation worth mentioning, though maybe unnecessary, is that a person may not see his or her reflection in either a photograph or a mirror, or in a video recording of a mirror. You have to stop and think about that thought for a moment, and maybe you've never considered it before, but it's worth thinking through -- because somewhere in that reality, God has provided Himself a way of protecting you.

From the idea of mirrors we can see how God, the Inventor of mirrors, can make something seem very close when it's not close at all. We can also see how something may be hidden from our eyes completely. The thing or person may still be present, but cannot be seen because of a very simple introduction of the shield and buckler of the Lord, hidden under the shadow of His wings. Perhaps these verses with which we are very familiar, even though they have a spiritual counterpart, actually mean exactly what they say. I'm willing to place my trust in that.

And that's just my take on it ....