

July - September 2013

ARMOR OF GOD

C O N T E N D I N G F O R T H E F A I T H



The KINGDOM of GOD

W h a t i s i t ?

- The Kingdom of God-
What is it?
- Restitution of All Things • We Must Be Born Again • Appreciation

WELCOME TO THE FEAST

This third quarter issue of the Armor of God is just in time for the upcoming celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles which falls on the third week of September this year. The celebration will start on Sept. 19 up to the 26th – a total of eight days.

All Bible believing Christians, particularly those who sincerely believed that the word of God is a “lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path” (Psalms 119:105) are encouraged to find time and partake in the celebration. It is to everyone’s advantage to observe these festivals because the God who commanded it also made a promise to bless those who are faithfully keeping it – irrespective of nationality.

These festivals are not Israelite in origin, as some assume they are. The Bible maybe an “Israelitish” book, but the instructions contained therein came directly from the God who created the entire human race; and He claimed that the feast days are definitely His. Notice: “Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them concerning the **feasts of the LORD**, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, **even these are my feasts.**” (Leviticus 23:2)

As Jesus told the devil, “Man (mankind as a whole) shall not live by bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God”. (Mat. 4:4) Thus, regardless of national descent, Bible believing Christians need to keep these God-ordained holy days because the word of God covers the entire human race, and these festivals are direct instructions from Him.

Now, the reader may find this particular festival strange. And why not, it is hardly heard within the community of Christians. And if ever they have read it in the Bible, they hardly understand its meaning and the events it portray.

The Church of God International will be celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day at three (3) locations in the Philippines. All readers of this magazine who want to observe in order to know more about the festivals of God are definitely welcome. Just chose which feast site you are comfortable with to attend, or contact the Festival Coordinator at the following numbers: Mobile: 0922-8188360; Landline: 995-0294.

Your attendance on these meetings will greatly enhance your knowledge about God’s marvelous plan for humanity. So, welcome to the Feast which the Lord truly wants His people to celebrate with joy and cheerfulness!

- Eleno S. Mellomida

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The KINGDOM OF GOD What is it?

by Winston S. Co

Jesus came preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God and He urged everyone to repent and believe the gospel, Mk. 1:14-15. Consistently, His parables and teachings were centered on the Kingdom of God. This was the *gospel* He preached from the beginning until the end of His ministry during His walk on earth. Now, *gospel* and *kingdom* are two inseparable "items" in Jesus' teachings. So, first, what is gospel?

The word Gospel has its origin in Greek. Gospel is a word-for-word translation of the Greek word "evangelion;" "ev" for good and "angelion" for "message." The Greek word "evangelion" is the source of the English word "evangelist." The word gospel was first translated in the Old English "god-spell" which means "good news" or "glad tidings". Therefore, gospel simply means proclamation of "good message" or "good news."

Gospel as Traditionally Preached

To many, the gospel is the "good news" about Jesus Christ and the redemption that He brought by and through His life, death and resurrection. However, taking a closer look at Jesus' statements in the account of the four gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John). Jesus made it clear that His messages were not of His own but from God the Father Himself (John 17:1-8), and He made it known to the disciples and commanded them to proclaim the same gospel while waiting for His second coming (Mark 16:15). He further emphasized that we have to believe in this message in order to be saved (John 17:14, 20). What then is this gospel message that Jesus brought from the Father?

Definitely, it was not about Himself! There is a big difference between the gospel *of* Jesus Christ and the gospel *about* Christ. We know Jesus plays a central and extremely important role in Christianity, but He is *not* the gospel. He is the bringer and messenger of the *gospel* or good news which originates from the Father. There are many other

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gospels that people preach - gospel about Christ, gospel of salvation, gospel of grace, etc., - these are all auxiliary to the primary Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Gospel of God

The gospel that Jesus preached is about the Kingdom of God. Notice carefully: "After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," He said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:14)

For three and a half years Jesus went around town preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God. He sounded urgent in telling His audience to "repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). He admonished the disciples to consider the Kingdom of God as the top priority in their lives, and promised that their material needs shall be taken care of (Mat. 6:33).

Even as He was busy healing the sick and casting out demons, He used the occasion to explain to large crowds the 'mysteries' of the kingdom of God (Matthew 9:35). In fact, almost all His parables used the Kingdom of God as the main reference (Matthew 13). When asked by His disciples when the end of the world would come (Mat. 24:3), He answered, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come (Matthew 24:14). Jesus was true to His duty when He said: I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent (Luke 4:43).

After His resurrection, Jesus made several appearances before His disciples speaking to them on the same subject – the



Kingdom of God. Then He passed on to His disciples the work of preaching the gospel which they readily comply as the records testify (Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 8:4,12). Finally Paul, even at the twilight of his years, preached the same gospel that Jesus preached – the Kingdom of God (Acts 28:31). Definitely, it was Jesus' mission to proclaim the most important message that changed the spiritual perspective of His disciples at that time as well as His believers today.

Gospel of the Kingdom

To many, the Kingdom of God is a mystery. Paul, quoting the prophet Isaiah wrote: "No eye has seen, nor ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). This statement suggests that the world has no inkling, no clue, and no idea whatsoever on what God has prepared for humanity. This plan of God is so marvelous, precious, and intimate that no one can even begin to imagine. To the human mind, it is incomprehensible and inconceivable - so splendid no

one can easily contemplate and grasp it.

Paul revealed this majestic truth 2,000 years ago, and it is written in the bible. Yet, few know about it. Peter said even angels long to understand about it but they did not. (1 Peter 1:10-12) This mystery that was hidden for ages was exclusively revealed to the churches and to the saints (Ephesians 3:8-12; Colossians 1:25-27).

Christ was the "MESSENGER" of the gospel - the good news of the Kingdom of God. This message is the centerpiece of the entire Bible. This wonderful truth has been prepared by God since the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:34).

What is this Kingdom? Who will eventually inherit it and what will its composition be like?

The Kingdom

The word "kingdom" has two (2) basic definitions. The first definition refers to the classification of living things. We all studied this during high school days in our science biology class. According to Wikipedia, the classification of living things into

animals and plants is an ancient one. Aristotle who lived in 384–322 BC classified animal species in his work 'The History of Animals'. His pupil Theophrastus (c. 371–c. 287 BC) wrote a parallel work on plants 'Historia Plantarum' (The History of Plants).

It was Carolus Linnaeus (1707–1778) who laid the foundations for the modern classifications. He distinguished two kingdoms of living things: the animal kingdom and the plant kingdom. During my high school days, we had five classifications; the bacteria, single-celled, fungi, plant and animal kingdom. Thanks to the invention of microscope, it enabled us to dissect and classify "living" things.

Now, the Bible describes three (3) classifications of living things. They are enumerated in the first chapter of Genesis. First, God created the plant kingdom with its sub-classifications (Gen. 1:11-12). Then He created the animal kingdom (Gen. 1:20-24). Notice how God described the creation; 'everything after its own kind' - the vegetation after its own kind, the fowl of the air, the fishes of the sea, the livestock and cattle, all after its own kind.

However, when it comes to man, God created and fashioned him into His own image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-27). The Book of Genesis clearly speaks that man, you and I, are created after the God kind – the God kingdom.

The most significant truth overlooked by most in the creation account are the three (3) kinds of "living things" created by God : 1) the *plant kingdom* after their own kind, 2) the *animal kingdom* after their own kind, and lastly, the startling truth of them all – 3) the creation of man after the God kind! This maybe shocking to most

people but the word of God revealed it in plain and simple language!

The second definition of a kingdom is a state or a society headed by a king. A kingdom is an expansion of family into a society or political territory. For example, Israel came from the family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Thus, the phrase 'image and likeness of God' suggests man's awesome purpose to become a member of the expanded family of God.

The Inheritors

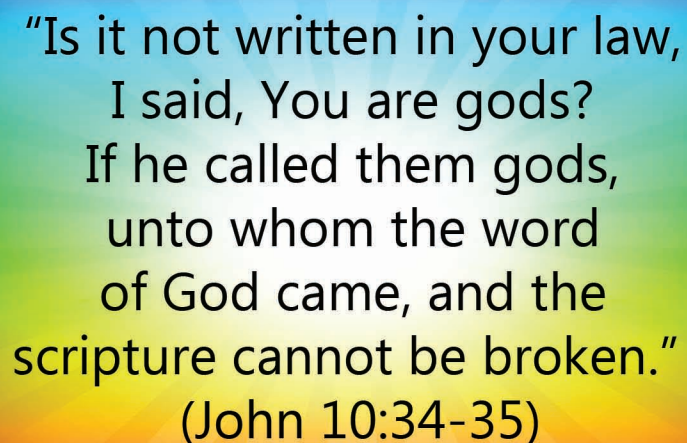
Today, the mystery of the Kingdom of God has been revealed to you. It is the same message preached by Jesus and the Apostles. The great mystery of the Kingdom of God is that you are destined to become a member of it. The Kingdom of God is a kingdom composed of God's Children. The future does not belong to the angels. It belongs to God's very own children. Notice: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of

adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:14-17).

Jesus had an interesting discussion with the Pharisees. In this account Jesus revealed a mystery, and instead of embracing the truth with gladness, the Jews rejected the concept and wanted to stone Jesus. The incident is recorded in John 10:22-39.

In this incident Jesus claimed He is the Son of God making Himself equal with God. The Jews wanted to stone Jesus for blasphemy. Then to everyone's surprise Jesus told them, "Is it not written in your law, I said, You are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken." (John 10:34-35) The 'gods' here is "theos" and "elohim", meaning god not mere judges!

What happened on this occasion? Jesus told them they are gods! This was not an excuse by Jesus to escape from



"Is it not written in your law,
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scripture cannot be broken."
(John 10:34-35)

the angry Jews by using a play of words by referring to “gods” as human rulers. No, Jesus was not misleading them or making up excuses. Jesus meant what He said; “You are god!” This was a forthright statement, a revelation of the destiny of man. This understanding is the clear and unmistakable context of the discussion. The phrase was a direct quote from Psalms 82. A clear understanding of Psalms 82 plainly refers to sonship.

Relating this incident to the prayer Jesus taught on the Sermon on the Mount addressing God as our Father, the context is clear. The familial relationship of sonship is obviously clear and was unheard of until Jesus introduced the relationship. To the Jews calling God as “abba” father was inconceivable. They automatically equated it with blasphemy. Yet, Jesus revealed the father and son relationship in the Sermon on the Mount with the famous prayer, “Our Father who are in heaven.”

Composition

Jesus gave a very important prophecy about the kingdom – that is the prophecy of re-birth or being born again. Nicodemus, having heard the Kingdom message of Jesus got curious. He came to Jesus by night saying: “we know that you are a teacher sent by God...” He had heard Jesus preached about the Kingdom of God and he wanted to know how one could enter into it.

The discourse is recorded in John 3:2-8. The answer of Jesus was simple. You must be born again. How? By water baptism and by spirit. First you need to be baptized for the remission of sins, and then you will be endowed with the gift of the Holy Spirit which will make you a son (Acts 2:38-39; Ephesians 1:13-14), and

finally your spiritual birth at the return of Jesus (John 5:24-29; 1 Corinthians 15:50-54).

Jesus’ message on the Kingdom of God is precise and clear as He patiently explained it to Nicodemus. Jesus used the Greek word ‘anagennao’ translated as ‘born again.’ The phrase BORN AGAIN appeared twice in the New Testament. Once in John 3 and another in 1 Peter 1:23. In both instances, the phrase translated BORN AGAIN came from the Greek word **anagennao**. The word **anagennao** is from two (2) root words; the word **gennao** which means “born or beget” and **an** which means “anew, again or above.” The word **gennao**, is sometimes translated as begotten, and at times as born. Nonetheless, both ideas of begotten and born are always implied in the word ‘Gennao’ for one is the antecedent of the other.

However, when the word ‘gennao’ is associated with a male, it is translated as begotten. When associated with a female it is translated as begotten or born.

of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

In the context of Jesus’ discussion with Nicodemus in John 3, BORN AGAIN refers to the entire spiritual process of spiritual birth. This process starts from baptism as being begotten of God through the indwelling of God’s Holy Spirit; the period of spiritual sanctification, gestation and growth, then finally to being born as a complete immortal son and daughter of God.

Begotten

At baptism, we are impregnated with God’s Holy Spirit – the spirit of sonship by which Paul said we cry “Abba Father”, Galatians 4:6. At the very moment of the impregnation of the Holy Spirit you now become a son or a daughter of God. The begetting or conception is the first stage of being born again. The Holy Spirit is a mark and a seal of ownership (2 Corinthians 1:22). It is a deposit assuring our inheritance in the Kingdom of our Father (Ephesians 1:12-14).

*The word **anagennao** can also be translated as “rebirth” which bible scholars agree to be a better translation than “born again.”*

Thus, in Matthew 1:20, 1John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,18, the word ‘gennao’ should be translated begotten, because God, the active agent is masculine. The word **anagennao** can also be translated as “rebirth” which bible scholars agree to be a better translation than “born again.” A good example is found in 1 Peter 1:2-4: ‘Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us **new birth** into a living hope through the resurrection

Peter said we are born of the incorruptible seed-in reference to the Holy Spirit which we will receive upon the laying on of hands (1 Peter 1:23). That is the instance of our begetting. This is the first step towards being born into the Kingdom of God.

Gestation

As a newborn babe in Christ, we are sanctified or set-apart by the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:2). We are being

taught and guided by the truth. Thus, the Holy Spirit becomes our comforter. This is our spiritual gestation period. The apostle Peter said we should, "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and to be Holy as God is Holy." A new life in Christ is the perfecting of our character until we are fully born into the very Kingdom of God as children of God Most High. "Born from above" which means the sanctification by the Holy Spirit, is a coined term not found in the original Bible, only in later translations.

Birth

The final stage of being born anew is the bringing forth of sons. This happens at the resurrection. Paul said in **I Corinthians 15:50** that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God". Paul proceeded to explain the concept of a spiritual transformation; a BORN AGAIN spiritual son of God. John also said it plainly in **I John 3:1-3 and II Peter 1:4** where we are said to participate in the **divine nature**.

Born again therefore according to Jesus refers to the final change and/or transformation of our physical body into spiritual body, the Eternal State of the righteous (see **Daniel 12:3**).

The Kingdom is "at hand"

At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, Jesus preached that the Kingdom is at hand (Matthew 4:17). This has immediate reference to Christ's redemptive sacrifice which opened up the door to the kingdom. Now, mankind has access to eternal salvation and be part of the kingdom of God. The salvation phenomenon has started. People are getting saved (Matthew 11:12).

The Kingdom of God is the family of God. It is a kingdom composed of God-like beings with God as our Father, Jesus Christ as our brother and the saints as



brothers and sisters in the family of God. As Peter said in **2 Peter 1:4**, it is the "partaking of the divine nature." At the end of our spiritual creation, indeed, we shall be like Him (**1 John 3:1-3**).

The first chapter of Genesis tells us the classification and origin of living things. God said we are created in the God kind – in His own image and likeness. Jesus further said, it is the Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom and that we must seek it as a matter of first priority. In the final reality, as described in **Revelation 21:5-7**, we shall become children of God.

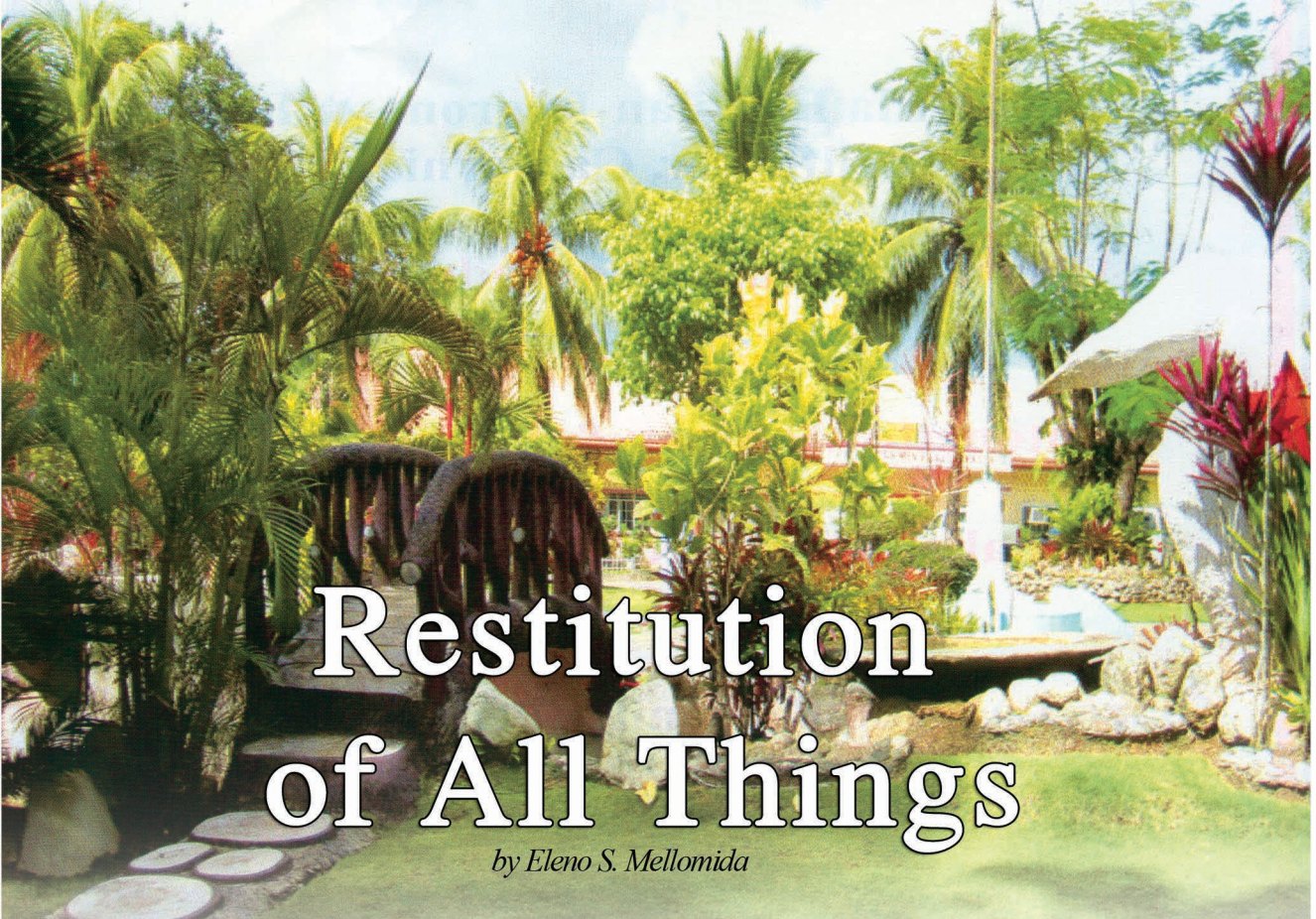
What then is the Kingdom of God? The Kingdom of God is the Divine Family of God that you can become a member of. That is the heart and core of Jesus' gospel about the Kingdom of God.

To sum it up

Jesus' gospel of the kingdom is simple. He said the Kingdom of God is near; in fact, it has started. Make yourselves ready. You can become a member of this wonderful kingdom. The Kingdom of God is

composed of spiritual children of God. Jesus said, "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (**Matthew 25:34**).

Then the finale of all things was inspired by the writer of Hebrews: "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, 'I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee'. And again, 'I will put my trust in him'. And again, 'Behold I and the children which God hath given me' " (**Hebrews 2:10-13**). Jesus will bring us to the kingdom, and we shall be God's children forever – brothers and sisters of Christ in the Kingdom of God! **AG**



Restitution of All Things

by Eleno S. Mellomida

Did you ever find time to visualize a world where no one is hungry? Where everyone has no problem supplying life's basic necessities? Can you imagine an environment where everyone is healthy? Where slums and ghettos are totally things of the past in all parts of planet earth; where no one dwells in conditions characterized by poverty, filth, squalor and irreversible misery?

The Cause of Hardships

The Bible tells us sin is the main cause of man's hardships. Paul wrote: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12).

Out of one man's sin the penalty cascaded down even to the ground where food grew. But think of what it was in the beginning. "God said, 'Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to

everything that creeps upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so', " Gen. 1:29-30. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil, Genesis 2:9.

Today, if you look at the barren, idle, rocky, and non-productive vast estates abundantly "growing" thorns, thistles, inedible weeds, and even dumped with hazardous wastes, you will remember God's condemnatory statement to Adam when He said: "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field..." (Genesis 3:17-18).

God pronounced a curse on the soil, and all kinds of poisonous

and unwanted weeds, shrubs, creeping and swirling vines started sprouting in all directions aggravating the burden in tilling the land. Whereas every green herb was for food, now there are thistles to compete in sucking the nutrients of the earth. All these happened because the first man made the wrong choice. Is there hope for a change?

The Promise to Restore

Peter before a large crowd declared, "And He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you; whom the heaven must receive until **the times of restitution of all things**, which God has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:20-21).

God promised to "restore all things" at the return of Christ. What then shall be restored, and what are the things that shall be prioritized? When Jesus returns, the earth has just experienced a vast devastation out of the disastrous events that happened because of man's madness for

war, as well as from the wrath of God. And considering that there are millions who survive the indescribable calamities before Jesus and the saints settle down to rule in the millennium, every effort will have to be expended to supply the immediate need of the starving population. The immediate need at the moment is food. This requires massive agricultural development to produce; and food cannot grow on poisoned, polluted and arid land. So what must be restored first?

Ecological Healing

Isaiah prophesied of a mass ecological restoration once Jesus and the saints start ruling on earth. Notice: "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing...Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the

habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes" (Isaiah 35:1,2,6,7).

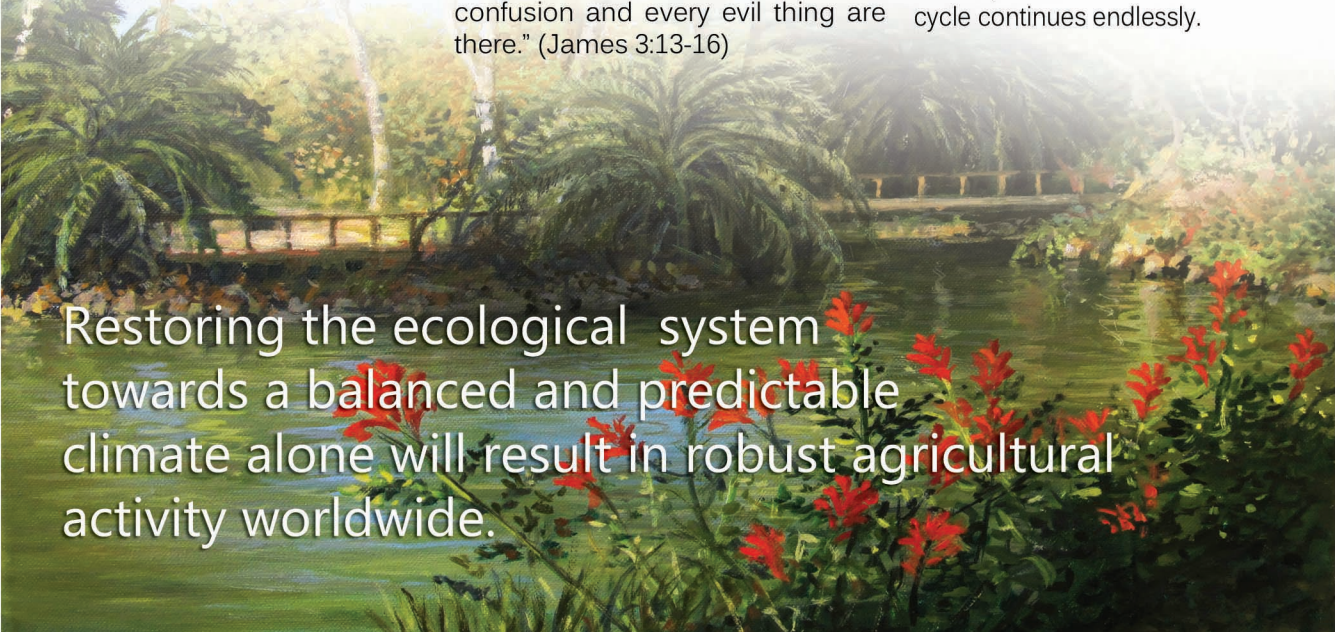
Restoring the ecological system towards a balanced and predictable climate alone will result in robust agricultural activity worldwide. No one will get hungry once these conditions will finally set in. The wealth produced out of cultivating a healthy ground are more than enough to feed and allow the inhabitants of the earth to enjoy the good life - a situation which the majority of mankind barely even come close to achieving it at this time.

Leadership Principles

The political leaders of today hardly offer any hope. Their professed intelligence is not in consonant with godly principles. James tells us more saying, "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there." (James 3:13-16)

These self-serving motives are highly visible during election time; and they continue to show up even within the halls of the so-called "august and hallowed chambers". Just watch some of our political leaders and you will easily confirm the reality of James' observation.

Today, we are governed by a system called democracy. One famous personality once said, "Democracy is the worst form of government, but the best so far man has invented". Democracy maybe one of the better forms of human government; but it is prone to abuse especially by those in "high places". Sadly, the penalty against wrongdoers in this set up is quite lenient because "constitutional rights" are given weightier consideration rather than what is right, just and godly. No wonder people are emboldened to enter politics because the opportunities of "making it big" is easier and the risk lesser. The few who may be honestly opposed to the practice will one day find themselves being "eaten up" by the system as well. This political virus is deeply ingrained in the system that it has greatly influenced the young generation who are supposed to be the hope of the motherland. And the cycle continues endlessly.



Restoring the ecological system towards a balanced and predictable climate alone will result in robust agricultural activity worldwide.

Jesus' concept of leadership is structured differently from what we have in the present. When his disciples started to "play politics" as to who should sit at His right or at His left, He told them: "You know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant..." (Mat 20:25-27).

Can you imagine a society where "honesty is truly the best policy", in word and in deed especially within the ranks of those who are tasked to lead? Picture to yourself a set up where the prevailing concept of leadership is changed to one founded on Jesus' principle that "whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted". Think of a time when those who are at the helm of leadership are unified in one common objective - that is to serve with integrity, honesty and utmost sincerity. And this is precisely what the leadership during the **restitution of all things** will make sure it happens.

Educational System

Now, everyone agrees that education is the key to free oneself from the scourge of ignorance resulting in helplessness and poverty. That's why massive educational drive will have to be carried out by the government of God at the outset of the restoration period. It will be spearheaded by Jesus and those who qualify in this life to rule with Him in the millennium.

What are the policies, the implementing rules and the guiding principles under which this restoring government operates? Christ, the King of kings

and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16) will see to it that godly standards will be instituted in all facets of the new order; and justice, fairness, equity, and peace are no longer empty slogans but a functioning reality. Isaiah tells us more: "He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears. But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He strikes the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist...They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, **for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord** as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:3-5, 9)

The most important aspect in the process of restoration is the complete change in man's outlook and attitude. Knowledge in the ways of God will be highly emphasized, and His basic laws expressed in the 10 commandments will be the guiding principles governing human relationships and all other aspects of governance. Today it is easily within reach, yet most consider it irrelevant when it comes to management rules. Thus, all the ills that plagued society as a whole are the result of disregarding God's way of life. That is why God will restore the system that shall finally allow mankind to live in happiness, peace and abundance - the same system Adam had the opportunity to partake prior to his "fall".

What's Your Take in All These?

When will all these happen? When Jesus returns and restores all things to its former glory! (Acts 3:21) Do you want to be there when it happens? Above all, do

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happens?**

you know that there is more to it than just being a mere spectator when **the restitution of all things** happens?

Notice what Jesus promised to those who will follow Him in this life: "And he that overcomes, and keeps my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I received of my Father" (Revelation 2:26-27). Where will they rule? Notice: "And has made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:10). "Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Rev. 20:6).

Do you want to be part of the ruling team when that time comes? Take time to study God's word, and contact us through the address given on the back cover of this magazine. It is probably the best decision you will make in this life.
AG



We Must Be Born Again...

by Rene D. Corpuz

There's an irony and a conflict among the millions of Christians. Most described "heaven" as a peaceful, and a happy place to be at; but no one truly wants to go there. Everyone clings to life on Earth as if there's nothing good to look forward in heaven at all. If heaven is such a beautiful place, why are the majority afraid of death? The wicked would have a hundred reasons why death is a fearful thing, but for the rest who believe they are good, what's there to fear? Why spend hundreds, thousands, and millions of hard-earned money to continue living in an evil-filled, miserable life on Earth when Heaven has so much more to offer?

Could it be that Christians actually took notice of what Jesus said in John 3:13: "No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man." What happened to everyone who had lived and died including the patriarchs and the prophets?

Wait a minute, didn't Jesus say that we can "see" and "enter" the Kingdom of God? (John 3:3, 5) Isn't it that the phrase "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven" are interchangeable like what Matthew 4:17 and Mark 1:15 wrote? Doesn't that mean there are actually those who had already gone up, seen, and entered heaven?

Yes and no. Yes, we can "see"

and "enter" the Kingdom of God, (or kingdom of heaven, if you prefer that description) and No, Jesus really did mean it when He said NO ONE has ever gone into heaven, including the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the Prophets, and prophecy seems to suggest no one ever will. God the Father Himself is leaving heaven and "coming down" to Earth (Revelation 21:3). Surprised? It is surprising, but it is TRUE. But if no human had actually set foot in heaven, and if prophecy suggests we won't go there, what is this kingdom of God Jesus is preaching about that we can "see" and "enter"? And regardless of whether it's in heaven or anywhere else, HOW can we "see and enter" that Kingdom?

Unless One is Born Again

In an evening visit from Nicodemus, a respected leader and teacher in the Jewish Community, Jesus said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

This is not the response we would have expected from what Nicodemus told Jesus. He was discussing how the Pharisees knew Jesus was a "teacher come from God" and the "signs" that Jesus did proves that He is God-sent, instead, Jesus replied, "unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Jesus must have seen more pressing questions in the heart of Nicodemus. Jesus knew Nicodemus was not there to simply tell Him the Pharisees knew He was God-sent. Jesus responded to Nicodemus' statement by opening to him the doors of salvation, by giving him important keys, the truth about how to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3). Yes, Jesus talked about "salvation," of receiving eternal life in the Kingdom of God. And this is what our hearts truly want as well, we don't want to die, we want to continue living, and not surprisingly, we want that life to be here on Earth! We are most willing to spend every last dime just so we can breathe a hundred seconds more. And this is exactly the message Jesus delivered to Nicodemus, the opportunity to see and enter the Kingdom of God, the opportunity that is also being extended to us.

Nicodemus would have been in his 50s or 60s. He wanted to see God's Kingdom, but to be born again to see it? So Nicodemus asked a very logical question: "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be



And now what are you waiting for?
Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away,
calling on his name.

Acts 22:16

born?" (John 3:4, NKJV) Thanks to Nicodemus' follow-up question, we now know the answer how to enter the kingdom!

"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:5)

Two Conditions to Enter the Kingdom

Jesus gave Nicodemus two conditions to enter the kingdom. The first condition is to be born of water, the second is to be born of spirit. While Nicodemus appeared to have had no idea what Jesus spoke of, the Christian world of today knew exactly what Jesus meant, water baptism, and the in-dwelling of the holy spirit.

However, in today's Christian world, there have become many different forms and ideas concerning water baptism, and what is meant by being born of the spirit. And unfortunately, there is only one correct way and interpretation, and it is important that we understand it if we are to enter the kingdom of God.

Those of us who were born in

mainstream Christianity believed that we were baptized when we were little babies. The truth is, it's not baptism at all. It's just water sprinkling, it DOES NOT FULFILL the condition Jesus gave to Nicodemus. Baptism is being fully immersed in water, as a symbol of death and burial (Romans 6:3). There is an important pre-condition to baptism, which is "repentance" (Acts 2:38). This was expressed by Jesus in Matthew 4:17 and Mark 1:15. The same condition was given by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:7-8). Repentance is an act where an individual undergoes a change of heart, an admission of wrongdoing, and makes a promise to self and to God, to follow His laws, and to stop sinning. This is the simplicity of what repentance means, and this is the primary condition to baptism. Having gone through repentance, the individual is ready for baptism, the symbolic burial of the old self and the symbolic emergence of a new one from the "watery grave". This condition can only be met by one of "adult" mind, not the

[Continued in page 15]

There is a very nice song sung by Louis Armstrong entitled "What A Wonderful World". You may have heard him sing this song with his characteristic raspy voice. The song is about appreciating the simple things in life that many of us often take for granted. We will go through the lyrics of the whole song and try to visualize the things mentioned:

*I see trees of green,
red roses too
I see them bloom
for me and you
And I think to myself
what a wonderful world.
I see skies of blue
and clouds of white
The bright blessed day,
the dark sacred night
And I think to myself
what a wonderful world.
The colors of the rainbow
so pretty in the sky
Are also on the faces
of people going by
I see friends shaking hands
saying how do you do
They're really saying I love you.
I hear babies crying,
I watch them grow
They'll learn much more
than I'll never know
And I think to myself
what a wonderful world
Yes I think to myself
what a wonderful world.*

The thoughts and theme of the song are captured in one word: appreciation. And that's what this article is all about.

Everyone Wins With Appreciation

When was the last time you appreciated someone? Try to recall the facial expression of the person whom you sincerely complimented, and recall how you feel afterwards. How did it feel to sincerely appreciate someone or something? Were

you happy? Did you feel light afterwards? Did you feel a positive attitude coming through? If your answer to the questions were yes, then you have learned the lesson of appreciating very well. But, if you can't remember appreciating somebody or something, then you should start doing it because we are missing something good in our lives.

Now what about the time you were appreciated for something you did or for just being you? How did it feel? Were you happy? Even elated? Did it inspire you to do even better? Did it boost a sagging morale? The odds are it did more than just that.

It made you feel better about yourself, or even about your situation. So no matter where appreciation came from – from the giver or to the receiver, everyone wins. So we should all try to be appreciative.

What to Appreciate

In order to the habit of being appreciative, I will list down several items we can appreciate. It will not be an exhaustive list. The idea is to get everyone thinking about what to appreciate. Each of faces a

unique circumstances and the things we should be appreciative of are also unique. But here are some things that we can all be appreciative of:

1.) Appreciate life – For all of life's troubles, pains, toils, trials, tribulations, challenges and hardships, it is still safe to say "Life is beautiful". Even the daily mundane routine of life is something to appreciate. We may find it boring until something shakes us and makes us rethink about it. Too often we take life for granted, pursuing this and that, trying to stay ahead in life. When sickness comes, we suddenly feel vulnerable. We feel our mortality come to the fore. And that maybe the only time we appreciate one thing we have taken for granted – life's simple joy of tasting our food. When we get sick, do we have the appetite to eat what's on our table? Probably not. And if our sickness is quite dreadful, that maybe the only time to think about many things we may have missed

Appreciation

by Ferdie Padilla

– time with our family, time to appreciate the beauty of friendships, time to study God's word, time for prayer. Just to be alive is something that we all should appreciate. Each day we wake up, thank God that He has kept us safe and sound while asleep the previous night, that He has created another day for us. Just to be alive is simply great as can be read in **Ecclesiastes 9:4-6 (NIV)** “⁴Anyone who is among the living has hope—even a live dog is better off than a dead lion! ⁵For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten. ⁶Their love, their hate and their jealousy have long since vanished; never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun.” And that would indeed be very tragic. If we are dead, we will no longer experience anything. We will no longer see beautiful sunsets, feel the cool breeze on our faces, laugh at the jokes of our friends, hear the laughter of our loved ones. So think about it. Feel free anytime you like it to view the green trees, red roses blooming, look at the skies of blue, clouds of white, welcome the bright blessed day even the dark sacred night, appreciate the colors of the rainbow, watch people going by and hear babies crying. Sing songs like the one mentioned earlier. These things will all tell us, we are alive. We are alive. And that should be something to appreciate. They make life a richer experience.

2.) Appreciate people you care about and people in general – Life as we know it was not meant to be lived alone. This fact is traceable to the very beginning when God created man and woman. Let's go to **Genesis 2:18 (NIV)** “¹⁸The LORD



God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” Dropping to verses 21-24, we read **Genesis 2:21 - 24 (NIV)** “²¹So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. ²²Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. ²³The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.” ²⁴For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” If we read verse 23 again, there is reason to believe that Adam appreciated the fact that God gave him someone like him, a human being, to love, to nurture and cherish, to start a family with. And that's another thing we should be appreciating – the love of our families and fellow man in general for we are all of the same human family. Husbands should appreciate the fact that their wives love them, by ensuring that their children are well taken care of, that food is available when they go home, that the house is kept, that she is there to listen when things are rough in the workplace. Wives should be appreciative that their husbands are doing everything that they can to ensure that the family live a good life, that they are faithful to

them, that they love their children, that they don't smoke or get drunk or are doing unlawful things. Children should be appreciative of their parents' undying love for them, for providing them a good education, for simply being there when life's pressure sometimes takes a toll on them. We all should be appreciative of things that our brothers or sisters do for us no matter how trivial they may seem. We should be appreciative of our brethren who support us in trying times, who lend a hand when needed, who are shoulders to cry on. We should be appreciative of the ministers who are doing their very best to help us in our Christian walk, who counsels us, who heeds our requests for prayers and anointing when we are sick. We should be appreciative of friends who tell us things honestly what we may not like to hear but are in the end good for us (they are real friends, by the way). There are a lot of people we may have come into contact with and have taught us valuable life lessons. They maybe our former teachers, colleagues or friends who have gone abroad. Let them know we appreciate the things we have learned from them. And yes, be appreciative of people who do appreciate you sincerely.

3.) Appreciate God's love – Appreciating God's love is a must to say the least. After all, our very existence, our calling, the blessings that have come our way all came from Him. He enabled us to see

His magnificent creation and enjoy them at the same time. It was He who gave us our family and friends. The first two items we have listed to appreciate eventually finds its beginning from God. We should appreciate all of these things and be thankful to Him. We should appreciate His Son's very great sacrifice without which our salvation would never be possible. Consider if Christ did not come on this Earth to suffer, bleed then die for all of us. We will never ever have the chance to inherit eternal life in His Kingdom if that were the case. We will never experience the tremendous joy of eternity with God our Father and Christ His Son as promised in the Bible. But thankfully and we should appreciate this, that Christ our Savior did not hesitate to come down to do His Father's will to save us. There are many other things we should appreciate from God. We should appreciate the fact that He has given us laws which make life happier, healthier and more fulfilling. We should appreciate His annual holy days to remind us of His plan of salvation and along the way as we observe them helps us gain a better understanding of what is in store for us in the near future and beyond to eternity. We should appreciate the spiritual gifts He has given us to help us in the service of the brethren and at the same time aid us in character development. We should appreciate the fact that He makes Himself available to us to listen to our prayers 24 hours, 7 days a week all year round. God is never too busy to concern Himself with our cries for help, for our pleas for forgiveness, for our requests for healing or for just plain conversing with Him. We should appreciate the fact that He has given us His Word in written form so that we know His will, His plans

and His laws. From that same Word, we can draw inspiration, comfort and assurance to help us on our way to His Kingdom. He has never abandoned us. And that should be something we all must appreciate and be thankful for. Finally, we should appreciate the fact that God is God and will always stay that way. All of the things we can appreciate about God point to the fact that God is a God of love. With what we have discussed in this article, we can better appreciate **1 John 4:16 (NIV)** "16And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him."

Appreciation works

We all know that we can do nothing by ourselves where our salvation is concerned; we need to rely on God. Because of His love, we now have the assurance of salvation and of help in other areas of our lives. If we appreciate this fact, it would be easier for us to practice love also in our day to day life because we are encouraged to show love as our Father showed love to us. We know that the way of love is the only way to go. We know it works. We can appreciate the difference between our former ways and the way of God. We now can appreciate life in a better light. We now can appreciate others better because we now know they too will become members of God's Family someday. We now can appreciate God better, and this will draw us nearer to Him. Finally, to keep us always in an appreciative mood, let us all heed what is said in **Philippians 4:8 (NIV)** "8Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things." **AG**

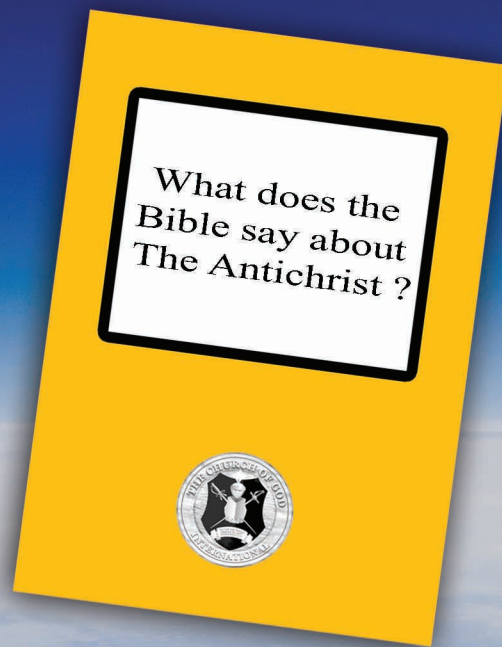
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sweet and innocent, helpless little babies!

The act of admitting sin or wrongdoing means we understand that there is an absolute standard of right and wrong, and we're not talking of our standard, or of any other individual's standards, but God's, a standard that is high above ours and literally rules our lives and demands our obedience.

Baptism is more than a ritual that represents death, burial, and resurrection. It also represents the symbolic washing, cleansing, forgiveness and removal of sins (Acts 22:16). Thus preparing the body for the receiving of the most holy gift—the Holy Spirit. The body being a representation of the temple of God's holy spirit, it needs to be cleansed, purged, before it can be infused with God's holy spirit (I Cor. 3:16-17, I Cor. 6:19). Once filled with the Holy Spirit, our body now belongs to the Lord, we can no longer do with it as we please. It is this holy spirit that seals our redemption, that will transform our bodies from physical to spiritual at the return of the Lord Jesus (I Corinthians 15:50-53, Ephesians 1:13-14).

Baptism, being born of water, is an outward representation of our inner desire to implement the changes God requires in our lives. Once we have fully committed and proven ourselves to change, received the gift of God's spirit as a sign of God's acceptance, we are ready to be fully born again—to be transformed from physical to spiritual. If we value life, if we truly desire to live forever, if we want to enter the Kingdom of God, then we must be born again, of water, and the spirit. **AG**



Speculations have been made about the antichrist spoken of in the writings of the Apostle John (1 John 2:18-19). Know who he really is.

Request for a FREE COPY of the Booklet
"What does the Bible say about THE ANTICHRIST?"
Text your name and complete address to 0917-8116365.



THE CHURCH OF GOD INTERNATIONAL MEETING PLACES

Manila

6th Floor, Peeksun Building
Princeton St. [Along Shaw Blvd.]
Mandaluyong City, Saturdays, 10:00 am

Naga

Villa Caceres Hotel, Naga City
Saturdays 10:00 am

Alabang

4Th Floor Metropolis Star Mall, Alabang
Muntinlupa City, Saturdays, 2:00 pm

Negros Occidental

Brgy. Vito, Sagay City
Saturdays, 10:00 am

Malolos

Hiyas Convention Center - Governance Bldg.
Malolos City - Bulacan, Saturdays, 2:00 pm

Mindanao

Alson's Palace, Maranding, Lala
Lanao del Norte, Saturdays, 10:00am

Cebu City

Rajah Park Hotel
Fuente Osmena Circle
Saturdays, 2:00 pm [Every 2nd Saturday of the Month]

Iloilo City

Iloilo Midtown Hotel
Yulo Street
Saturdays, 2:00 pm