

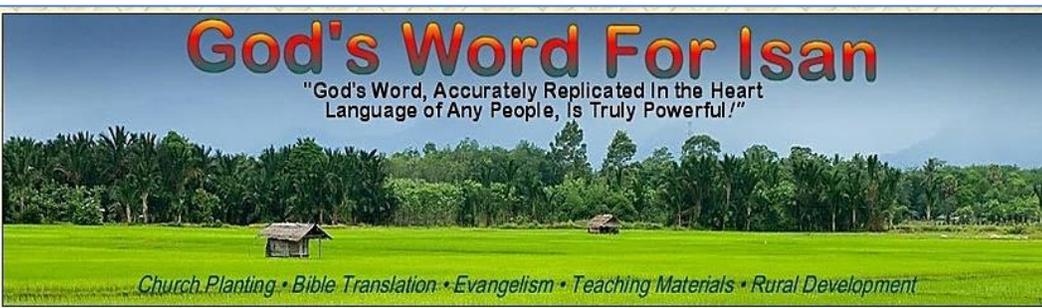
RON & CHERYL MYERS



Going Into All the World
With the Gospel
of Jesus Christ

God's Word For Isan

"God's Word, Accurately Replicated in the Heart
Language of Any People, Is Truly Powerful!"



Church Planting • Bible Translation • Evangelism • Teaching Materials • Rural Development



Ron & Cheryl Myers

GOD'S WORD FOR ISAN NEWSLETTER

January, 2017

New Year's Wishes For 2017

What Year Is It Again?

By Ron Myers

May You Experience God's Blessings For This Coming Year, Through Christ;

Our dating system is according to the *Gregorian* Calendar, today's internationally accepted system of date keeping; also known as the Western or Christian Calendar. The official Thai year is 2560, because Thailand's official dating system follows the Buddhist Calendar year, which marks the Buddha's final reincarnation and ascent to Nivana—543 years before our dating system, which marks the Birth of Christ. Then there's the Lunar Calendar; which goes by the moon's lunar cycles, which many cultures still rely on. If you receive a new Thai calendar, it will likely contain all four dating systems and holidays: Buddhist, Christian, Chinese and Lunar! Incidentally, according to the Chinese Calendar, today is the first month of 4715—year of the Rooster. The animal designations rotate on 12 year cycles—I was born the year of the snake. According to the Jewish Calendar, it's now the year 5776. There are numerous calendar dating systems, all with their own counting methods, and most all of them not starting on January 1st.

We often speak of making New Year's resolutions: "*Turn over a new leaf*," "*Out with the old—In with the new*." Or, listen on TV as Guy Lombardo and his *Royal Canadians* play *Auld Lang Syne*, as the globe in New York City's Times Square descends, welcoming in the new year. Other cultures have numerous traditions, but expressed in different ways. Many cultures celebrate their own New Years at different times of the year. For Thai Christians, their New Years carries almost equal celebratory significance as does Christmas, due to their culture's traditional emphasis on the New Year.

I recall visiting my friend, Mr. Chavalit, on Chinese New Years day. Chavalit owned a small motorcycle repair shop. As I pulled up on my bike, I was surprised to see the family's home furnishings sitting out on the sidewalk—as well as everything from his adjoining motorcycle shop. I watched as Chavalit hosed down the floors of the small wood-framed building while his wife and children wiped down or scrubbed everything. The family's Chinese ancestor spirit shrine remained in place, sitting against a wall on the floor. I asked Chavalit what was happening; "*We're cleaning out all of the bad and starting afresh for the new year – it's our tradition*." Being of Chinese descent, he held to many of the old beliefs and traditions of his ancestors, including keeping a Chinese-styled ancestor veneration shrine inside their residence. Also, being of Thai nationality, he held to Thai traditions as well.

One highly-celebrated Thai tradition with combined socio-cultural and spiritual overtones is known as *loi-gratong*, roughly meaning "float offering." A time of merriment and goodwill, this festive occasion is held each year during the twelfth lunar month (*mid-November*.) In the early evening, people gather on the shores of local-area waterways, be it rivers, canals or streams. Individuals bring their decorative, hand-crafted floats, generally the size of a dinner plate with a candle positioned in the center. Accompanied by *loi-gratong* music, the candles are lit and the float offerings are gently pushed out away from the shore to drift away downstream.



There are various meanings associated with the festival. One is to pay homage to the goddess of waters for her blessings. Another is to dispense with any misfortune or sin committed, floating it all away downstream. The significance of *loi-gratong* was recorded centuries ago in certain annals, which stated that cholera had arisen in a certain city, causing inhabitants to either flee or die. The sacrifice required to remedy the misfortune incurred was to float candles on small rafts to send a goodwill propitiatory offering to quell the ire of ancestral spirits. This tradition and resultant festival is fundamentally Animism or spirit appeasement.

Bottom line; whether it's seeking to expunge misfortune from one's home by a traditional New Years cleansing custom, float one's sins away during a yearly festival, or appease offended spirits by means of a trivial sacrifice, *none* of these things can truly remedy or absolve the curse of sin. Only one thing can solve the sin problem once for all time; that is, the sinless, sacrificial blood offering, death, and bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; "*The Lamb of God, [who] taketh away the sin of the world*." (John 1:29) The simple fact is, the only thing these lost souls can do is: "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved*." (Acts 16:31) Please pray for the people of Thailand that they will really *hear* the Word of God and develop a true hunger for Christ as never before.

Ministry News: Not too long ago, there was no such thing as an Isan Bible. But that has all changed now! After over two decades of work, the Isan New Testament is finished and making headway into Isan lives throughout Thailand's Northeastern (or Isan) region; both in book and digital format. . . digital modules for smartphones (which almost everyone there now has) and computer-based Bible study programs. The next major step is to convert the Isan NT into audio format; for listening on computers, on Smartphones, and on CD/DVDs (no more cassette tapes), as well as on Bible audio player devices. Also, the Isan NT is presently being converted from Thai script into Lao script book format; and, into digital reading and listening format, to distribute in Communist Laos.

Prayer Requests: Please pray for strength, wisdom, and good success as we continue to deliver the Word of God into Thailand's little-reached areas. There is still much left to do: namely, translate portions of the Old Testament that speak to God's power and Majesty in Creation; record the Isan NT and Considering Creation into audio format; convert the Isan New Testament into Laotian script; and produce more basic evangelism and teaching materials.

Medically: My doctor has discovered that both my knees are bone-on-bone, and need immediate attention. He will also be repairing my right shoulder's rotator cuff, which is not as bad as my left shoulder was. I hope to return to Thailand after that. Pray that I can get a visa without any problems.

In closing, Cheryl and I want to extend our sincere appreciation for your prayers and financial partnership. You are an integral part of this vital ministry.

May God Richly Bless You and Yours Throughout 2017,

Ron & Cheryl Myers
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www.IsanBible.org