



Ron & Cheryl Myers



GOD'S WORD FOR ISAN NEWSLETTER



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A Faith-based Ministry Sustained Through the Prayers and Partnership of God's People

Returning To Our Work in Northeast Thailand (Part III)

"For a great and effectual door is still open, despite hindrances."

By Ron Myers

THE INFAMOUS THAI PASS:

By now, you may have heard I was denied entry into Thailand. Following is an account of what happened. After receiving many well-wishes and promises to keep me in prayer, I said I'd keep in touch as I boarded my Japan Airlines flight back to Thailand (Tuesday, April 12). I planned to be there for a month, returning on May 12. After an 11½ hour flight with a one-hour stopover in Tokyo and another six hours to Bangkok, I was excited to be back in the storybook land of Golden-Roofed Temples. Also known as *The Land of 10,000 Smiles* – Cheryl and I had invested the better part of our hearts and lives there, serving the Lord and reaching out to the people with the Gospel message of eternal hope. Entering the vast hallway leading to Thailand's Suwanapum International Airport, I was glad to be back after a two-year interruption caused by the Covid-19 global pandemic shutdown. I was primed for a great time in Thailand: seeing old friends, working alongside Baaw Ter, my coworker, and seeing the Lord open new doors of opportunity, as He often does.

Traversing the kilometer-long hallway, I approached a makeshift checkpoint where I was asked for my passport and accompanying documents – proof I'd received all required Covid inoculations and passed the Covid PCR test before flying. The attendant then asked, "Where's your *Thai Pass*?" Not overly concerned, I said I'd applied for one, but the Thai Embassy website was continually down, adding that I had not yet received the confirmation email. ...*"I have to do what?"* I couldn't believe my ears. If I didn't have a *Thai Pass*, I would *not* be allowed entry. A few minutes after landing in Thailand, and after having exhausted all possibilities with the *powers-that-be* – and after sleeping a few short winks on the chairs in the hallway – I was being sent home. It's now a day later and I'm presently in Japan, writing you from Tokyo's Narita airport as I wait to board my connecting flight to San Diego. This note comprises April's "news from the mission field" newsletter. On a positive note, the Thai person in charge of Japan Airlines' Thai airport operations assigned me rows of empty seats on both flights home, where I got a few more winks of shuteye. Gotta love the irony of it all.

The *Thai Pass* turned out to be a simple check-off sheet showing that persons entering had reserved a hotel room beforehand for an overnight stay to await the results of an in-country Covid test. Nothing more; nothing less – just busy work IMHO. When I read about it on their website, it was an option, yet it had become mandatory when I arrived. Friendly Thai airport personnel around me, including the lady who had informed me I couldn't enter (it was her job), thought I could make a new reservation from there. However, the man in charge of the *Thai Pass* counter was adamant that it had to be done before entering Thailand. He sounded like a broken record, repeating "*Need Thai Pass, Need Thai Pass*, ad infinitum to every question I posed. Mr. Anirat, senior manager of Japan Airlines' Thai airport division was there with me (more about him below). He used a Thai term to describe the man who refused to answer my questions as being a *hard-headed old bureaucratic fuddy-duddy*. I had made the needed hotel reservations in advance where I usually stay, at Bangkok Christian Guest Home, but the man insisted it had to have been done using the now-infamous *Thai Pass* – someone's bureaucratic brainchild gone wild. It made no sense to me, nor to the Thai airport personnel gathered around me, revealing that not all Thai thought it served a purpose.

Many Thai citizens had fallen prey to this also, not being able to enter their homeland because of misleading communication concerning the overreaching, Covid-test-related *Thai Pass*. I was informed before leaving that, since it was causing such an uproar of discontent, even among the Thai populace, it was slated to be done away with next month – returning everything to normal. The Thai lady with a Japan Airlines managerial position told me this news. She was there at the onset when I was detained and who had later gotten me the great return seats. She revealed she also wanted to take an overseas vacation but was afraid to do so until after the *Thai Pass* conundrum was officially rescinded – welcome news. Yet it doesn't help me now, sitting here writing you from Tokyo's Narita airport as I head home. Like Arnold Schwarzenegger, who now-famously announced "I'll be back," ...I too will be back – probably next month after all vestiges of *Thai Pass* have been rescinded. My unopened bags are still packed and ready for travel.

NOW, THE GOOD NEWS:

As I said before, I'm writing this from Tokyo's Narita airport on my way home. I initially fought it in my heart as being another ploy of the enemy, trying to hinder God's work. Yet; uncannily, God gave me His perfect, abiding peace as I sensed His presence with me while seated on the plane at the Thai airport tarmac awaiting takeoff. I don't understand God's timing and why things occurred as they did – in both the natural and spiritual realms, God does. Yet as I reminisce, some really good things did happen which I'll share with you here.

God has given me a passion for witnessing – at home and especially in Thailand in ways the Thai Buddhist mind can readily understand. I delight in sharing the Good News with whomever at every opportunity I get. As Paul said, I am not ashamed of the Gospel. During the first leg of the flight, I was in an aisle seat beside a fellow San Diegan. A middle-aged Safron-robed Thai priest with an aloof-looking demeanor was seated directly across the aisle. There I sat, at 40,000 feet over the Pacific in the middle of the night amidst a plane full of lost souls. I prayed that God would open doors to talk with my new friend seated beside me and provide an opening to share the Gospel with the Thai priest across the aisle. Also, an opportunity to approach the talkative young Thai cabin attendant assigned to my seating area. I was able to do so and give her a copy of *Considering Creation*, which she expressed delight in receiving.

Concerning Christian, the young San Diegan seated alongside me; God opened an excellent opportunity to speak with him about his need for Christ on the first leg of the flight. We were chatting when an opening presented itself quite naturally. While discussing church attendance, he said he was raised Catholic but was away from the church. I said, “May I ask? ...have you ever thought about what answer you’d give God if were He to ask you right now, ‘Why should I let you into my Heaven?’” He paused a moment and said, “*Wow! I’m not sure... never thought about it before, but I know I need to.*” I sensed freedom to speak directly as I continued, “*Well, you sure better because there’s coming a time when everyone will face that scenario. And, you better have the right answer because there’s only one God will accept. Do you know what it is?*” He was taken aback yet intent on finding out.

I opened the Bible on my cell phone and explained verse by verse about God’s Love and His Provision for our salvation through His Son, whose blood sacrifice paid the full price required to propitiate for the sins of the whole world, including yours and mine. He sighed in reply, “*I really needed that. Thank you so much. I’ve been trying to get my life together; I’m flying to the Philippines for a visit to get away a while to think and recoup.*” There I sat, alongside a young man named Christian, and witnessed as he prayed, spilling out his heart as he received the Savior – the One with whom his given name was associated. Jesus said that “*there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.*” Christian had just done so, and we both were rejoicing – even at 40,00 feet over the Pacific that night. A new creation in Christ, he thanked me profusely when we landed as we bade each other goodbye, promising to stay in touch.

Concerning the priest, I realized a straightforward approach wouldn’t work, so I prayed God would provide an appropriate way to give him my Intelligent Design evangelism booklet, *Considering Creation*. Thai Buddhists who read it exclaim how much they like it and pass it on to others to read. Many say, “*You’re right; I never thought about it before, but there must be a Creator,*” the first step to receiving Christ. The priest held a small ring of smooth wooden Buddhist prayer beads with his eyes closed. I waited till he opened his eyes, signaling he was finished. He looked over at me for no apparent reason (except the Lord’s doing), giving me a perfect opportunity to ask how many years he’d been in the priesthood. He smiled and handed me his prayer beads as a gift for no apparent reason except the Lord’s doing. He had to have overheard me talking to Christian as I taught and led him to Christ. I then realized his giving me a gift was a natural opening for me to provide him with a gift in return – my *Considering Creation* booklet. He looked at it, read a bit, then put it in his pouch to read later. Please pray for these lost Thai souls with whom I’d been given a unique opportunity to meet and share the Gospel.

I also talked with Mr. Anirat, the Thai airport senior manager for Japan Airlines, who had chosen a fitting phrase to describe the person in charge of the Thai Pass entry kiosk. Anirat came to the boarding area before departure to wish me well – only friends do that in Thailand. We exchanged business cards and conversed a bit. I asked if he liked nature; he said yes, like all Thais since they love nature. This was the queue to introduce him to my Intelligent Design evangelism booklet, which he seemed pleased to receive, even asking me to autograph it. I’m sure I’ll see both Mr. Anirat and Ms. Chatkamon again, one of his assistant managers. Pray for their souls, please. She was present when I was being detained in the vast entrance hallway. Later that morning, she took me to Japan Airlines’ executive lounge for a complimentary breakfast and to freshen up. She also ensured I had good seats for my flight home – open rows where I could relax and sleep stretched out.

Many airport personnel agreed there shouldn’t have been a problem, but it’s over now. If the witnessing opportunities I had, and the fruit gained, were the only reasons God had me there on this short but meaningful trip, it was worth every inconvenience. May God receive all the glory, honor, and praise due His Holy Name. He knows the end from the beginning; we don’t. I’m at rest because God blessed me with the assurance that all is well and nothing occurred beyond his perfect will. I also experienced His abiding presence as I sat on the tarmac awaiting takeoff. Satan, the enemy of men’s souls, would have me gone for good. That will not happen as long as I have breath and God wants me there. Please pray for my return, that all will go according to His will. What have I learned? ...***Trust God in All Things!***

I’m grateful for all of you who prayed for me and gave to help defray my expenses. Also, you who prayed in earnest upon learning I was having trouble due to a new entry requirement, the Thai Pass. It wasn’t a lost trip. Nor will the following ones be. I also thank my close friend, Pastor Ek, who came to the airport at midnight to pick me up and had to wait till the wee morning hours until he learned I’d be returning home. Thank You, Brother Ek! I also want to thank my faithful friend and coworker, Baaw Ter, who had waited for months in anticipation of my return, and for the very eloquent, meaningful prayer he offered on my behalf when it appeared I’d not be back at this time.

God is Great ~ That’s Why We Serve Him,



Ron and Cheryl Myers
Missionaries to Thailand
God’s Word for Isan
<www.IsanBible.org>

“Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? ...For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen” (Romans 11:33–36)