

## NEW YEAR'S DAY (MONDAY, JANUARY 1ST 2007)

January 1st, we all celebrate the day as **New Year**. The **New Year** is an event that happens when a culture celebrates the end of one year and the beginning of the next. Cultures that measure yearly calendars all have **New Year** celebrations. January 1st is the first day of the year in the Gregorian calendar used by most developed countries. When you study the cultures of different countries, you can see how these people are celebrating New Year's Day.

For example: **The Jewish New Year** (*Rosh Hashanah*) takes place in the month of Tishri (September and October on the Gregorian calendar) and commemorates the anniversary of Creation. It is a time of restricted rejoicing because the celebrations are muted in acknowledgement of the great judgment taking place. As is customary in Jewish festivals, observance begins on nightfall the day before *Rosh Hashanah*. Celebrants prepare by bathing, receiving haircuts, donning special clothes and giving treats to children. **The Japanese celebrate the New Year** in a big way. The official New Year falls on January 1st, however, in actuality the season itself runs from the 31st of December through the 3rd of January. Preparation for the New Year begins during the middle of December, with people preparing New Year's postcards usually purchased from the Japanese Postal Service known as *nengajo*. These cards are sent to business clients and acquaintances, friends, and family members, and are delivered on New Year's Day by the Postal Service, which employs students part-time to help distribute the huge volume of cards, which come in each year. When you consider that each Japanese person sends anywhere from 20 to several hundred cards. As the year's end draws near, people begin cleaning their homes and workplaces in preparation for the New Year. This is a time of major cleaning and even temples dust off their Buddhist images. News programs often show the cleaning of major Buddhist images such as the Nara Great Buddha (*Nara Daibutsu*) with monks climbing the images to clean them. **The Chinese New Year** occurs every year at a new moon during the winter. The exact date can fall anytime between 21 January and 21 February inclusive, on the Gregorian Calendar. Because the Chinese calendar is astronomically defined, unlike the Gregorian Calendar, the drift of the seasons will change the range. Each year is symbolized by one of 12 animals and one of five elements, with the combinations of animals and elements cycling every 60 years. The Chinese New Year is generally celebrated with firecrackers, and in some places with a parade. **The Vietnamese New Year** is the Têt Nguyen Dan. It is celebrated on the same day as Chinese New Year. **The Telugu New Year** generally falls in the months of March or April. The people of Andhra Pradesh, India celebrate the advent of Lunar year this day. **The Thai New Year** is celebrated from 13 April to 15 April by throwing water. **The Sunni Muslim New Year** is celebrated on 1 Muharram. In 2008, we will see two Muslim New Years. The ancient Roman calendar had only ten months and started the year on 1 March, which is still reflected in the names of some months, which derive from Roman numerals: September (Seventh), October (Eighth), November (Ninth), and December (Tenth). Around 715 BC the months of January, February and Mercedonius were added to the end of the year (Mercedonius in leap years only). In 45 BC, Julius Caesar introduced the Julian calendar, dropping Mercedonius and decreeing that the New Year should start on 1 January.

In the Middle Ages in Europe a number of significant feast days in the Ecclesiastical calendar of the Roman Catholic Church came to be used as the beginning of the year: **In Christmas Style:** The New Year started on 25 December. This was used in Germany and England until the 13th century, and in Spain from the 14th to the 16th century. **In Annunciation Style:** The new year started on 25 March, the feast of the Annunciation. This was used in many parts of Europe in the Middle Ages. Annunciation Style continued to be used in Kingdom of Great Britain until January 1, 1752, except Scotland, which changed to **Circumcision Style** dating on 1 January 1600. The rest of Great Britain changed to **Circumcision Style** on the 1 January preceding the conversion in Great Britain from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar on 3/14 September 1752. The UK tax year still starts on 6 April, which is the 25 March + 11 days for the conversion from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar.

(Over)

**In *Easter Style*:** The New Year started on Easter Saturday (or sometimes on Good Friday). This was used in France from the 11th to the 16th century. A disadvantage of this system was that because Easter was a movable feast the same date could occur twice in a year; the two occurrences were distinguished as "before Easter" and "after Easter".

**In *Circumcision Style*:** The new year started on 1 January, the feast of the Circumcision (of Jesus). Since the 17th century, the Roman Catholic ecclesiastic year has started on the first day of Advent, the Sunday nearest to St. Andrew's Day (30 November).

Examine the past and plan the future. Breaking the resolutions is easier than making them. Maintain a reasonable sense of values, love, compassion and kindness. Maintain a good health by not eating JUNK food. Be careful in giving advice - listen more and talk less. Read bible and pray every day.

**I wish you and all your dear ones a Happy and Prosperous New Year blessed with fulfillment of God's promises.**

**Bible readings for Monday, January 1st, 2007.**  
(New Year's Day; Circumcision of Our Lord)

**Before Holy Qurbana**

Genesis - 12: 1-9  
Deuteronomy - 10: 12 - 11:1  
Ezekiel - 18: 21-24

**Holy Qurbana**

General Epistles: I John - 3: 13-18  
Epistles of St. Paul: Romans - 2: 28 - 3: 8  
Holy Gospel: St. John - 15: 5-19

With prayers,  
Thomas Alex