

Queen Elizabeth's Final Christmas Message

This Christmas will be sad for many who will miss Queen Elizabeth's annual Christmas message. She carried on her father's tradition of a radio speech, adding a television broadcast from 1957 forward.

That 1957 message, which I recently watched on YouTube, now sounds quaint. The queen spoke about the enormous change of that era and the temptation to compromise our values because of cynics among us. This rings even more true today, 65 years later.

The queen, the longest-reigning monarch in British history died Sept. 8 at age 96, and the media exploded with stories. I have my own story about her.

In May 2016, I presented her with a copy of the Modern English Version of the Bible, a day I'll never forget.

Queen Elizabeth served as supreme governor of the Church of England and was known to have a deep faith. In her 2002 Christmas message, she said, "I know just how much I rely on my own faith to guide me through the good times and the bad. Each day is a new beginning. I know that the only way to live my life is to try to do what is right, and to put my trust in God."

I came to understand more about her faith when I presented the copy of the MEV, which was dedicated to her by the translators. It was specially bound by her official bookbinder, with real gold used to stamp her coat of arms on the cover and gild the edges of the pages.

We arranged to present it in person to Her Majesty in a special box bearing the royal coat of arms and the words:

“Presented to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on the 9th of May 2016.” We made the presentation in St. George’s Chapel at Windsor Castle, her primary residence and where her personal pastor, the Right Rev. David Connor, met with her frequently for devotions and prayer.

The Modern English Version is an update of the 1611 Authorized Version, which was dedicated to its publisher, King James I. In the same tradition, the translators of the MEV wrote the following on the opening page:

“To Her Majesty Elizabeth II, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and of Her Other Realms and Territories, Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith. The translator of the Bible wishes grace, mercy, and peace through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The ceremony at the end of Sunday vespers (evening prayer) in St. George’s Chapel was months in the making and was possible only with the help of some British friends who were personal friends of the dean of the chapel. Because the queen was then 90 years old and was beginning to fail, we knew weeks earlier that she might not have the energy to attend.

She did not, but I was told that the presentation to Connor was tantamount to presenting the Bible to her. He promised he would give it to her, and I was told later that she read the translation many times.

I wrote about this back when it happened and again after she died. I also recorded several Strang Report podcasts about Queen Elizabeth, which you can hear on the Charisma Podcast Network.

With Christmas approaching and because her annual messages were a time when she articulated her personal faith, I looked up last December’s speech. She spoke of how the birth of a child represents the dawn of endless potential. Over 9 million

watched as she closed her remarks:

“It is this simplicity of the Christmas story that makes it so universally appealing: simple happenings that formed the starting point of the life of Jesus—a man whose teachings have been handed down from generation to generation, and have been the bedrock of my faith. His birth marked a new beginning. As the carol says, ‘The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.’ I wish you all a very happy Christmas.”

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