

BEYOND TODAY

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Our promised part in a reign without end

After 70 years on the throne, for many British citizens Queen Elizabeth II is the only monarch they have ever known. Christ's followers, however, have been promised rulership in His Father's Kingdom in a reign that will last forever.

On 6 February 1952, Prince Philip, during a visit to Kenya with his wife, the then Princess Elizabeth, had the sad duty of informing her that her beloved father, King George VI, had died suddenly in his sleep. This meant that at 25 years old Queen Elizabeth II was to succeed him to the throne, with her coronation taking

place in June the following year.

Now aged 95, Queen Elizabeth II has become Britain's longest-reigning monarch. Celebrations for her platinum jubilee in 2022 are well advanced, although recent concerns regarding her health have led to uncertainties as to how involved Her Majesty might be and prompted questions as to who will succeed her.

Succession is important to human rulers. It used to be that a younger son could displace an older daughter to become heir to the crown. This regulation was eliminated with the Succession to the Crown Act, which came into force in March 2015. With so much focus on physical sovereigns, many forget that the Bible describes a royal line where the rulers will live forever.

A different kind of royal household foretold

A follower of Christ has been promised a seat beside Him on the throne which He shares with the Father. Jesus told the apostle John concerning the church at Philadelphia: "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (Revelation 3:21). He repeated this promise of an enduring royal priesthood in Revelation 1:5-6 and 20:4-6.

Old Testament prophecies reveal that God will send



Crowns, along with thrones and sceptres, are symbolic of a monarch's reign. Length of tenure may change with the accession of a new king or queen, but Christ's reign will be forever.

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a Messiah to rule over the whole earth (Isaiah 9:7; Zechariah 14:9). That Messiah is Jesus Christ, the Anointed of God. The New Testament states of Christ that “of His kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:33). Those who are Christ’s will be part of that Kingdom and members of God’s family. As the apostle Peter put it, “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

In order to become part of that royal household, however, one has to repent of one’s sins, accept Christ as personal Saviour and Lord, be baptised and receive the gift of God’s Holy Spirit. That gift bestows a tiny portion of God’s very essence which merges with our human spirit and engenders us as His literal spiritual children, waiting to be born into His family at Christ’s return.

Kings and priests for eternity

Upon taking up our new roles, we will not be required

to make any declaration of commitment – as Queen Elizabeth was required to – because we make that commitment to Christ and our Heavenly Father at baptism. We demonstrate our loyalty in the way we live out our physical lives. Peter explained, “For the time has come for judgement to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17).

Jesus truly knows what is in our hearts and will be aware should we prove unfaithful to Him. If we are found to be loyal, we shall stand with Him when “the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” (Revelation 11:15). He invites us to become kings and priests under His authority.

We are being trained now for this wonderful future. To study this subject further please request or download our booklet *Why Were You Born?*

Mark Webb

Hebrew custom linked to present-day coronation ceremonies

Long before Queen Elizabeth II was crowned, a traditional monarchical anointing was already being followed by the ancient Israelites.

Before her actual enthronement in Westminster Abbey in 1953, Queen Elizabeth II was anointed with a sacred oil called “*chrism*,” This same custom of anointing with a special oil was practised in the crowning ceremonies of the kings of ancient Israel. It’s a tradition that has long been a component of the enthronement of a king or queen regnant in Britain.

Chrism is a Greek word meaning “anointing” and relates to Jesus Christ, as the LORD’s Anointed (1 Samuel 24:6). The ingredients of this sacred oil are not generally known, to ensure it can never be used for secular or profane purposes.

In Old Testament times Saul, David, Solomon and the subsequent kings of Judah continued being anointed at their coronations, right down to the Babylonian conquest by King Nebuchadnezzar some 600 years before the time of Christ (for example, see 2 Samuel 2:4; 1 Kings 1:39).

Queen Elizabeth II followed this same custom prior to being enthroned. Dressed in simple white garments,

she was ushered into a prepared canopy held up by four members of the Order of the Garter.

The actual anointing was the most sacred part of the coronation that could neither be witnessed by those in attendance, nor was it televised on account of its sacred symbolism. She was anointed by the highest ecclesiastical official of the Church of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

This special oil is only used in the anointing of a monarch. As it was done in ancient Israel, so this procedure continues in the coronation of kings or regnant queens in Britain.

Should the monarch be married, his wife would also be anointed as queen, but not with *chrism*. A lesser oil would be used for her. Only a king or queen regnant (that is, reigning in her own right such as Elizabeth II or Queen Victoria) would be anointed with this most sacred oil. The only exception was at the coronation of William III and Mary his wife, when both were anointed with *chrism*, because the British Parliament had offered them the crown

as joint sovereigns.

With this anointing as part of the traditional coronation ceremony of British monarchs, we see a historical and biblical link with the ancient Israelites. This link is thor-

oughly expounded in our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. Please request or download a copy.

Gerhard Marx

The sacred significance of anointing

In Scripture, investitures of three types were accompanied by anointing. All three come together in the person of Christ.

The term Christ is an English derivative of the New Testament Greek word *christos*, which means “anointed.” The equivalent Hebrew word in the Old Testament is *mashiach*. This term is transliterated in the King James New Testament as *messias* (John 1:41; John 4:25), a word that has come down into modern English, including many Bible versions, as “messiah.” Both Christ and Messiah mean “anointed” or “anointed one.”

Regarding the significance of anointing, *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* states: “In the Hebrew Bible, the term is most often used of kings, whose investiture was marked especially by anointing with oil” (Bruce Metzger and Michael Coogan, editors, 1993, “Messiah,” p. 513).

Anointing, this same source tells us, “was widely practised in the ancient Near East; the Amarna letters [on clay tablets found in central Egypt] suggest that anointing was a rite of kingship in Syria-Palestine in the fourteenth century BCE, and . . . [a story from the time of Judges] assumes its familiarity (Judges 9:8-15)” (“Anoint,” p. 30).

Yet, as this and other sources point out, it was not only kings who were anointed in Scripture. Israel’s high priests were anointed too (Exodus 29:7), as were some prophets (1 Kings 19:16).

In biblical usage, anointing is an act of consecration, setting a person apart for the holy work of God. It symbolises the pouring out of God’s Spirit onto an individual, representing God’s power and intervention to perform the duties of the office to which one was anointed.

An anointed King, High Priest and Prophet

The Jews of Jesus’ day eagerly anticipated a specific prophesied figure referred to in several scriptures as the

Messiah or Anointed One, a great King of the lineage of David who, by the power of God, would restore Israel and rule the world. Jesus of Nazareth was that Anointed One – and He will yet fulfil these prophecies.

The apostle Peter explained that “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him” (Acts 10:38). Christ’s anointing was directly from the Almighty.

Jesus affirmed His future role as King over the earth. For example, He stated, “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory” (Matthew 25:31).

Christ is also our High Priest, as the writer of Hebrews records, “But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation” (Hebrews 9:11).

In addition to these two roles, Jesus considered Himself a prophet (Matthew 13:57). He was viewed as such by the multitudes who declared, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee” (Matthew 21:11).

Following baptism we receive a small portion of God’s Holy Spirit, which represents our anointing and is also a deposit or guarantee towards what we shall receive in full measure at Christ’s return. The apostle Paul explained: “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee” (2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Ephesians 1:13-14).

To learn more about the ongoing work of Jesus Christ, please request or download our Bible study aid *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*.

Could you be harbouring hidden sins?

The last edition of this British Supplement explored a parable that Charles Dickens described as the greatest short story ever written, the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Part two outlines further lessons to be gleaned from the actions of the father and elder brother.

Previously we learned from Luke chapter 15 how the younger of two sons had demanded his inheritance while his father was alive, then abandoned his family and culture. He squandered his money and only came to his senses when he reached rock bottom, craving pig fodder during a famine. He decided to return home since even his father's servants were well off compared with his current circumstances. His father recognised his younger son's repentant attitude and forgave him instantly and completely, and restored his status as a son. The father then threw a lavish party with music, dancing and feasting to celebrate the return of a son he had almost given up for dead.

The prodigal son represents those considered sinners such as the tax collectors and prostitutes of that time who were attracted to what Christ was teaching. Now it is time to focus on other characters in the story – the father and the elder son.

The father

Who does this man represent? Some might say God the Father. However, a stronger case can be made for Jesus Christ. Saving lost sinners was a prime reason Jesus Christ lived on earth. In John 6:38-39, Jesus states, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day."

In Matthew 18:12-14 we find the parable of a man with a hundred sheep who leaves the ninety-nine to seek the one that has strayed. Note verse 11: "For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost," and verse 14: "Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." The shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine sheep to find the one that has gone astray is undoubtedly Jesus Christ (Luke 15:4-7). In the same way, the woman who searches for the lost coin (Luke 15:8-10) and the father in the parable of the prodigal son most likely represent Jesus Christ.

The elder son

In this parable, the elder son and his father do not appear to have a close relationship. The celebration was organised by the father with no input from his firstborn. The latter asked a servant what was happening, not his father. He did not share his father's excitement about his younger brother's return. When his father invited him to join the festivities, he refused and responded with anger. Hadn't he served his father faithfully for all these years, and what good had it done him? The elder son, unwilling to show any mercy, objected to his father forgiving the prodigal son's shameful behaviour.

Shocking as it may seem, many who think they are living Christian lives are actually deceiving themselves.

The elder son represents the scribes and Pharisees. In Luke 15:1-2 we read, "Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, 'This Man receives sinners and eats with them.'" They didn't accept what Christ was doing.

The scribes and Pharisees

Israel and Judah went into captivity because they disobeyed God's Law. Consequently, the religious leaders developed numerous very-exacting regulations designed to prevent someone from accidentally sinning. Originally, they may have been well-intentioned but the effect was to burden the people and hinder them from entering the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 23:13).

The Pharisees realised that their obedience to the Law couldn't possibly be perfect no matter how well they kept it. Therefore, they reasoned they could never achieve enough merit to atone for sin by themselves. So they developed "traditions of men," an oral tradition that

went above and beyond the Law. They believed these extra works would earn them God's forgiveness and favour.

In Mark 7:6-7, Christ says: "Well did Isaiah [29:13] prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honours Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'"

At the time of Christ the scribes and Pharisees appeared very religious – they gave long prayers in public, made it obvious when they were fasting and had a bell rung whenever they gave an offering. They loved being greeted in the market place and expected the best seats in the synagogue. They were meticulous in their tithing practices whilst neglecting justice and the love of God (Luke 11:42-43). According to Jesus, public adoration would be their only reward.

The prodigal son was forgiven the moment he returned home. His action showed his repentant heart. He didn't even get a chance to ask for forgiveness before his father had forgiven him unconditionally. The elder son also needed forgiveness, however he didn't recognise this. By refusing the father's grace, he was condemning himself.

Jesus is pointing out rather bluntly that, given the Pharisees' unwillingness to abandon their erroneous idea that forgiveness must be earned through works, they were in effect choosing *not* to enter the Kingdom. Jesus had

offered them the invitation to come in and join the celebration. They chose not to accept. The Pharisees were hopelessly deceived. They excelled at *pretending* to be good, indeed they believed they had done good and thus in their eyes they were good. By considering their man-made traditions, opinions and doctrines superior to the Word of God, they didn't see a need for a personal Redeemer to atone for their sins.

A challenge to the Pharisees

The parable was obviously unfinished, but Christ told it that way deliberately. He was making the point that sinners, such as the scribes and Pharisees, along with the elder brother in the parable, saw no reason to repent of living a sinful life, expecting to enter the kingdom of God through their own efforts. Instead, like all other sinners, these individuals were required to recognise the need to repent and accept God's divine forgiveness as an unmerited gift.

The scribes and Pharisees were challenged to complete their part in the story. How did they end it? By killing the One the father represented! They brought pressure to bear upon the Roman authorities, including Herod, and had Christ crucified a few months after hearing the three parables directed at them by Jesus.

Undoubtedly they congratulated themselves on preserving their man-made traditions. Little did they fathom that their deed had allowed Christ to be sacrificed as the Passover lamb. Jesus Christ's blood is a full and acceptable atonement for sin and provides us sinners a way to have our sins forgiven and be redeemed through divine grace.

To bring the point home, recall that Christ said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practise lawlessness!'" (Matthew 7:21-23).

Shocking as it may seem, by extension, many who think they are living Christian lives are actually deceiving themselves.

Whether we are obvious sinners like the prodigal son or we harbour hidden, as yet unrecognised, sins like the elder son, or a mix of both, the Parable of the Prodigal Son reminds us that if we acknowledge our guilt, repent and recognise our need for Christ as our Redeemer, we can become reconciled to our heavenly Father (Psalm 32:5).

For further information be sure to request or download the booklet *Forgiveness Is Possible*.

Wayne Topping

How did the story end?

Kenneth E. Bailey, a Presbyterian commentator who was fluent in Arabic and a specialist in Middle-Eastern literature has analysed the literary style of the story of the Prodigal Son. The story is in two almost equal parts, and each part is systematically structured in a kind of mirrored pattern (ABCD-DCBA) called a *chiasm*. It is a parallelism typical of Middle Eastern prose to facilitate story telling.

Simply put, the first half – where the focus is completely on the younger brother – has eight stanzas, and in this case the two parallels describe the Prodigal Son's progress from departure to return (ABCD-DCBA).

The second half shifts focus to the elder brother and progresses through a similar pattern. However, it ends abruptly after the seventh stanza: ABCD-DCB.

The final stanza is missing to emphasise lack of resolution.

What the gospel is – *and is not*

Multi-faceted and all-encompassing, God's plan of salvation is revealed throughout the Bible. Indeed it is the whole purpose of the Holy Scriptures.

Even before the universe was created there was the gospel, or good news, as the word signifies. Contrary to popular opinion, the gospel didn't begin with Jesus Christ's earthly ministry in the New Testament. The gospel of God is our Heavenly Father's good news about His Kingdom. This term shows it originated with God, Who delivered the message to earth through His servants. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news He brought as God's messenger. All are the same gospel; all are part of the wonderful news of what God has in store for humanity. Although the terms that describe it may vary, the message is always the same.

The apostle Paul sometimes used the term "my gospel" (Romans 2:16; 16:25; 2 Timothy 2:8). This does not mean the message originated with Paul, nor was it a gospel about Paul. It was a message he received directly from Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11-12).

One gospel with many facets

From the beginning we are called, justified and saved by grace (Galatians 1:6-15; Romans 3:24; Ephesians 2:8). The "gospel of grace" is another appropriate term that focuses on a different aspect of the same gospel Jesus preached: God's enormous love for us, expressed by His grace toward mankind. This message is also called "the gospel of your salvation" (Ephesians 1:13). Since our entrance into the Kingdom of God is synonymous with our salvation, there is no conflict in these terms for the gospel. Each complements and strengthens the other.

"The gospel of peace" is also used (Romans 10:15, quoted from Isaiah 52:7; Ephesians 6:15). The Kingdom of God will bring peace to the earth – an important result of our believing in and acting upon the gospel of the Kingdom. Prophesying of God's Kingdom, Isaiah said, "Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end" (Isaiah 9:7).

Jesus Christ preached the gospel of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14-15). His disciples taught the same message but with the added understanding of the meaning and importance of Christ's sacrifice and resurrection. The glorious truth is that this entire message is one seamless gospel, and "it is the power of God to salvation for every one who believes . . ." (Romans 1:16).

Beware those who preach a "different gospel"

It is dangerous to assume that all, or at least almost all, who bear the name Christian follow the beliefs, teachings and practices of Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us that not everyone who professes the name of Christ is really a Christian! The prophet Isaiah explained: "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

Jesus foretold that some would claim His name and expect to get into His Kingdom but will be shocked to hear Christ say, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" (Luke 6:46; Matthew 7:21-23).

***"To the law and to the testimony!
If they do not speak according to this
word, it is because there is no light in
them" (Isaiah 8:20).***

Christ and His apostles warned of false prophets, apostles and brethren who would use Christ's name and claim His authority. They would perform works that outwardly appeared good and right. However, they would not faithfully represent Jesus Christ or preach His Word. Their aim would be to capture the minds and hearts of humanity by attaching the name of Christ to biblically insupportable religious customs, doctrines and traditions that Jesus and His apostles neither practised nor approved.

So, what is this "gospel" Jesus proclaimed? What is "the Kingdom of God"? Why should we believe His message? What is it about His message that compels us to repent of our outlook and behaviour? Does His message affect our daily lives? Will it affect our future? If so, how? These are crucial questions. If the gospel of the Kingdom of God is the heart and core of Christ's teaching, shouldn't we be sure we properly understand what it is?

The focus of Jesus Christ's message was the announcement of a coming world government (Luke 21:25-31). This government will not be ruled by selfishly motivated humans but by Jesus Christ Himself, under the direction of Almighty God!

To study this important topic further please request or download *The Gospel of the Kingdom* and *The Church Jesus Built*.



Q Does God express emotions? Is He hurt by what we do to each other?

Reader in Redcar

A The answer is a clear yes. We see this in the Bible from a very early stage, as in Genesis 6:5-6: “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Human beings went all the way in their depraved conduct, embracing a lifestyle that could not continue, as we see in verse 6: “And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.”

God expressed an emotion that led to the action we read of in verses 11-12, “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked on the earth, and indeed it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth . . .” Here we see that God was displeased to such an extent that He brought an end to such misrule by sending the Flood to wipe out all and start again.

Almighty God first introduced himself to Abraham

Let the Bible Answer...

How does the Bible describe truth?

Absolute truth is only found in God’s word: Psalm 119:142, 151; 146:6; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

Truthfulness is a requirement of Christ’s disciples: Exodus 20:16; Luke 18:18-20; John 3:21; 4:23; 14:6; 1 John 2:21; 3 John 1:3-4.

Satan is the source of lies: John 8:44.

Truth can be corrupted by heeding human opinions: 1 Timothy 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 3:1-7; 4:1-4; 2 Peter 2:1-2.

some 4000 years ago and said, “Walk before Me and be blameless” (Genesis 17:1).

In chapter 18 God is asking as it were, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing?” (verse 17). Here we see that God was going to punish a people who, unlike Abraham, were living a way of life with which the Almighty was not pleased. Abraham pleaded with the Lord to spare Sodom and Gomorrah if there were even just a handful of inhabitants living a life pleasing to God. (Genesis 18:23-33). In verse 32 Abraham asked God to not be angered by the patriarch’s request for Him to spare the inhabitants of the two sinful cities. Expressing anger is an emotion.

Here we notice that in Abraham’s eyes, there was a possibility he could persuade God to spare these cities by appealing to Him. However, in this case, the people had gone too far for God to relent.

Often God does draw back from administering deserved punishment. Soon after the Exodus, Moses pleaded with God not to destroy the Israelites from off the face of the earth (Exodus 32:9-14). In Deuteronomy 9:19, Moses reminded the children of Israel of God’s initial purpose to destroy them all, “For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the LORD was angry with you, to destroy you. But the LORD listened to me at that time also.”

A prime example of emotion in the New Testament is found in John 11:35 where Jesus wept. He was visiting the tomb of his friend Lazarus, four days after he had died. Most of those grieving for Lazarus did not believe Christ was the resurrection and would be able to revive him from death. John 11:33 records: “Therefore, when Jesus saw her [Mary] weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled.” Christ showed His emotions when warranted.

Jesus was God in the flesh when He walked the shores of Galilee 2000 years ago. Both He and His Father are divine Beings who possess emotions when they are displeased or hurt by our sinful ways. Their emotions, however, are controlled, as ours should be. “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit [i.e. emotions] than he who takes a city” (Proverbs 16:32).

Uncontrolled emotions can lead to sin but emotions, nonetheless, are part of our make-up; it’s not a sin to express them. The Bible shows us that we should not sin when we are angry (Ephesians 4:26). So any anger that we may express needs to be controlled. Only God expresses perfect emotions. Since we are created in His image, we express emotions too, but not always with the necessary restraint. This is an area of our lives that we often find needs significant development to enable us to reflect our Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.



Letters From Our Readers

What Happens After Death? booklet offer

I lost my mother in September 2021, aged 90. It was a long and painful process, she fought it all the way. It would bring me some comfort to receive this.

Reader in Wellingborough

[Sounds like] good reading material. I have lost lots of family and friends to illness/old age.

Reader in Margate

I recently ordered some of your booklets and find them very interesting. I lost my husband last December and my best friend now has inoperable cancer.

Reader in Southport

Answers to biblical questions

Your publications have proven to be a great source of inspiration and often have held answers to questions I have struggled with.

Reader in Bristol

Grateful for booklets

I am very grateful for all the magazines and booklets I've received over the years. Please continue my subscription as they are my spiritual companions. Due to my disability, I cannot attend church, and without your booklets and magazines I would be lost.

Reader in Telford

Thank you for your booklets. They are very interesting to read with lots of information you never hear in other places.

Reader in Coleraine

Your little booklets are so very interesting and informative and are written well. I am enjoying reading them and they help me to understand the Bible much better.

Reader in Belfast

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Please continue my subscription to your wonderful magazine. It has really helped in troubling times.

Reader in Walsall

Please could you send copies of *Beyond Today* to the above address. I forgot to renew the magazine and miss reading your interesting and informative articles.

Reader in North Yorkshire

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Thank you so very much for providing me with this 12-step *Bible Study Course*. I have learned so much and continue to read my Bible daily.

Student in Salisbury

Thank you for the *Bible Study Course*. It gives a depth of understanding and encourages deeper reading of God's word.

Student in Skegness

Knowledge of God kept alive

Thank you for keeping the knowledge of God and His plan for all mankind alive.

Reader in Portsmouth

I want to thank *Beyond Today* for all you are doing to communicate the true word of God and Jesus Christ.

Reader in Montrose

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