



The DAILY JESUS NEWS #357
The Eternal Ministry of Jesus in Heaven
The Continuing Words and Works of the Risen Jesus Throughout Eternity Future

Jesus Speaks to the Church in Smyrna,
And All Believers Who Will Listen
Rev. 2.8-11

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8 *"I command you to write to the messenger of the church in Smyrna:*

"This what the One who is the First and the Last, who became dead and then returned to life again is saying.

9 *"I know your agony and your poverty – yet you are actually rich! I also know about the blasphemy of those who called themselves Jews and are not, but are actually a synagogue of satan.*

10 *"I command you not to be afraid of what you are about to continue to suffer. Look! The devil is about to throw some of you into prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. I command you to become faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the victor's crown of eternal life.*

11 *"Whoever has ears, I command them to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches. The person who is victorious, will never--ever be hurt by the second death."*

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	On the Greek Island of Patmos, Just Off the Coast of Turkey
Timeline	About 60 Years After Jesus Ascended
Jesus' Life Context	Stage IX: The Resurrection and Eternal Ministry of Jesus
	Jesus' Eternal Ministry in Heaven
	The Continuing Words and Works of the Risen Jesus Throughout Eternity Future
Title:	Jesus Speaks to the Church in Smyrna, and All Believers Who Will Listen

The Churches in Smyrna and Philadelphia were the only churches of the seven addressed by Jesus that did not receive any rebuke from him. Today we are seeking to listen to what the Spirit has to say to us

through Jesus's message to the Church in Smyrna. We will consider the four sections of this letter that we pointed out as the basic structure of all seven letters in DJN #356.

(1) Jesus identified himself as ***“the First and the Last, who became dead and then returned to life”*** at the beginning of his message to Smyrna. This is important because Jesus is going to command these believers to be faithful in following him, even at the cost of their lives. Our Lord is no hypocrite. He died under persecution far more intense than any of his disciples will ever have to endure. Yet he remained faithful. Since Jesus rose and then ascended back to heaven, he has the power to strengthen his followers in persecution, as he has done since he worked powerfully to encourage Stephen--the first martyr-- with a vision of his heavenly presence.

Jesus is also ***“the First and the Last.”*** These twin titles describe Jesus' pre-eminence in all of his creation. He was “The First,” or “before” everything else in creation by pre-existing it all as the Second Person of the Trinity. He is also “the Last” Person, who will wrap up all the events of history in his Final Return and Eternal Kingdom. Both “the First” and the “the Last” are positions of supreme authority, that belong to God alone. Jesus is the God-man who brings them both together in one Person--doubling the glory and honor of these Divine Titles.

(2) Jesus knew the agony under persecution, and humility of the Smyrna believers. He praised them for these traits, for they were the keys to the abundant spiritual riches these believers enjoyed. These were both characteristics that Jesus mentioned as core attitudes of true disciples in his “Teaching on the Mount.” (***“Blessed are the poor in spirit; Blessed are you when persecuted for my name's sake.”***)

The fact that God loves us unconditionally does not mean he seeks the easiest life for us. Quite the contrary. Love seeks only the best for others, even when it is incredibly painful to achieve. Faithfulness in enduring persecution is like that. Jesus's love for the believers in Smyrna did not lead him to deliver them from persecution. It led him to strengthen them with commands and promises through his Spirit that would supernaturally enable them to endure the unendurable, just like Jesus did. Faithfulness would then insure eternal rewards that made the temporary suffering less than nothing in comparison. Love seeks the best for others, not what is easiest for them.

(3) Jesus did not rebuke these believers in any way, but he did give them the command not be afraid of what was coming. His grace and strength were more than they needed to endure anything out of their love for him.

(4) Jesus ended with a strong promise that there would be absolutely NO pain in the second death--the separation of their invisible personality from their earthly body at physical death. The “first death” is the spiritual death that came to all people when Adam sinned, and plunged the entire human race and all creation down in “the fall.” Every person is born into this world in a state of spiritual separation from God--or death. This why we are all in need of salvation, and eternal life.

APPLICATION:

Believers who exit this world as martyrs in their “second death” have nothing to fear in dying. In fact, martyrs exult and glory in the privilege of dying out of their love for God! They go directly into the presence of God with no sinful failures burdening them down--no shame at seeing his Face--just rapture, joy and delight to see their Lord for the first time. This is the promise Jesus made to those who remain faithful to him in persecution.

Are you ready to die for Jesus? To endure persecution? What is the Spirit saying to you about this?