

**All Saints' Day and All Saints' Sunday**  
**Cycle B RCL**  
**Revised**

**Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-9**

The Wisdom of Solomon, the only Old Testament book originally composed in Greek, comes from the late second or early first-century BCE, from the Egyptian coastal city of Alexandria. The Wisdom of Solomon champions the idea of the immortality of the soul as the matrix within which God will reward the righteous and heal the sufferings of their earthly lives (3:4-5). The “shining” of the righteous souls reminds us of the reference to the resurrected who will “shine in the firmament” according to Daniel 12:3. The associated ideas of immortality, testing, and shining of the righteous also occur in the ancient apocalyptic (end-of-the-world) book we call First Enoch, chapters 102-104. Fragments of these chapters exist among the Qumran fragments of Cave 4, so they derive from an early period. In 1 Enoch as in Wisdom, the spirits or souls of the righteous dead will inherit felicity in the afterlife. Neither book shows interest in the idea of resurrection.

**or**

**Isaiah 25:6-9**

The latest material in the Book of Isaiah occurs in chapters 24-27, and researchers usually call it the “Apocalypse of Isaiah” because these chapters contain themes found otherwise only in apocalyptic writings. One such theme is that of God’s universal kingdom in verses 6-9 of today’s reading. A traditional *hymn* (25:1-5) such as we find in our Book of Psalms precedes this vision of the great feast of God in a restored Zion.

**Psalms 24**

This psalm reflects a liturgy of entrance into the sanctuary both for the congregation (24:3-6) and for God (24:7-10). Some commentators believe this psalm to be part of a New Year’s service in which Yahweh takes the throne as king over Israel for the ensuing year.

**Revelation 21:1-6a**

This passage is a mixture of allusions to scripture and to other ancient apocalyptic (end-of-the-world) texts. The promise that God will renew both heaven and earth (21:1) we find in Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22, as well as in the ancient non-biblical Book of Jubilees, where this renewal becomes a feature of the end times (Jubilees 1:29 and 4:46). Another non-canonical apocalypse, First Enoch, refers to a new heaven that will spring from the midst of the angels in the “tenth week of the world’s existence.” (1 Enoch 91:15-16) Third Isaiah gives us an important parallel to the figure of the new Jerusalem as a bride in Revelation 21:2: “And with the rejoicing of a bridegroom over a bride, your God will rejoice over you (Isaiah 62:5).” The figure of God wiping away tears derives from Isaiah 25:8 and has already appeared in Revelation 7:17. The “loud voice” (21:3) is the heavenly echo, known to the Rabbis as the *bat qol*, an authoritative voice but not necessarily the voice of God. The voice’s utterance has the appearance of being a hymn, likely a familiar composition John incorporated into his text.

**John 11:32-44**

Jews of the first century believed that the soul required three days to get to the underworld (Sheol) after the apparent death of the body. The information that Lazarus had been in the tomb four days (11:17, 39), therefore, meant that Lazarus was irretrievably dead. So, in this last of the Fourth Gospel’s “signs,” Jesus showed his power over the last and greatest enemy, that of death and the grave. Ironically, this power over death motivated the decision of the officials in Jerusalem to get rid of Jesus (11:46-51).