

Lectionary Bible Study

For Sunday, November 3, 202 (All Saints' Sunday)

Isaiah 25:6-9 (Amplified Version)

⁶And on this Mount [Zion] shall the Lord of hosts make for all peoples a feast of rich things [symbolic of His coronation festival inaugurating the reign of the Lord on earth, in the wake of a background of gloom, judgment, and terror], a feast of wines on the lees—of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

⁷And He will destroy on this mountain the covering of the face that is cast over the heads of all peoples [in mourning], and the veil [of profound wretchedness] that is woven *and* spread over all nations.

⁸He will swallow up death [in victory; He will abolish death forever]. And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces; and the reproach of His people He will take away from off all the earth; for the Lord has spoken it.

⁹It shall be said in that day, Behold our God upon Whom we have waited *and* hoped, that He might save us! This is the Lord, we have waited for Him; we will be glad *and* rejoice in His salvation.

Discussion Starters

1. What is the "mountain" that is referred to in this passage?
2. What is the "shroud that enfolds" all people (v. 7)? What does it mean that God will "destroy" it?
3. What application does the New Testament make of this great feast (see 1 Cor. 15:54; Rev. 21:4)? Who is excluded from it?
4. What does it mean that God "swallows" up death?
5. Define the salvation talked about here – both from the perspective of the first audience and for us today.

Revelation 21:1-6a (Amplified Version)

Then I saw a new sky (heaven) and a new earth, for the former sky and the former earth had passed away (vanished), and there no longer existed any sea.

²And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, all arrayed like a bride beautified *and* adorned for her husband;

³Then I heard a mighty voice from the throne *and* I perceived its distinct words, saying, See! The abode of God is with men, and He will live (encamp, tent) among them; and they shall be His people, and God shall personally be with them and be their God.

⁴God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more, neither shall there be anguish (sorrow and mourning) nor grief nor pain any more, for the old conditions *and* the former order of things have passed away.

⁵And He Who is seated on the throne said, See! I make all things new. Also He said, Record this, for these sayings are faithful (accurate, incorruptible, and trustworthy) and true (genuine).

⁶And He [further] said to me, It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I [Myself] will give water without price from the fountain (springs) of the water of Life.

Discussion Starters

1. Describe in your own words what John sees.
2. What new realities accompany this new Jerusalem? What, in particular, do you think John wants his readers to notice?
3. Why will there be no more tears, death or mourning? What is the "old order?"
4. What are Alpha and Omega, and how do they serve as a good description of God?

John 11:32-44 (Amplified Version)

³² When Mary came to the place where Jesus was and saw Him, she dropped down at His feet, saying to Him, Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.

³³ When Jesus saw her sobbing, and the Jews who came with her [also] sobbing, He was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. [He chafed in spirit and sighed and was disturbed.]

³⁴ And He said, Where have you laid him? They said to Him, Lord, come and see.

³⁵ Jesus wept.

³⁶ The Jews said, See how [tenderly] He loved him!

³⁷ But some of them said, Could not He Who opened a blind man's eyes have prevented this man from dying?

³⁸ Now Jesus, again sighing repeatedly *and* deeply disquieted, approached the tomb. It was a cave (a hole in the rock), and a boulder lay against [the entrance to close] it.

³⁹ Jesus said, Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of the dead man, exclaimed, But Lord, by this time he [is decaying and] throws off an offensive odor, for he has been dead four days!

⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, Did I not tell you *and* promise you that if you would believe *and* rely on Me, you would see the glory of God?

⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.

⁴² Yes, I know You always hear *and* listen to Me, but I have said this on account of *and* for the benefit of the people standing around, so that they may believe that You did send Me [that You have made Me Your Messenger].

⁴³ When He had said this, He shouted with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out!

⁴⁴ And out walked the man who had been dead, his hands and feet wrapped in burial cloths (linen strips), and with a [burial] napkin bound around his face. Jesus said to them, Free him of the burial wrappings and let him go.

Discussion Starters

1. Since Jesus knew He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead, why does He cry?
2. Do you think the responses of Mary (v. 32) and Martha (v. 39) are due to lack of faith? Why or why not?
3. Since Lazarus was going to die again, what was the benefit of raising him?

4. Have you ever attended a funeral where there was no hope of eternal life? What was that like? How did it differ from funerals where people believed in life after death?

WRAP UP

What key insight did you gain from this Bible study? How might it make a difference in how you live today?

All Saints' Sunday (Year B) Commentary

Isaiah 25:6-9

25:6–8 The end of darkness and death. The *feast* (6) introduces a positive note into what is otherwise chiefly an account of ills removed. It has the note of achievement (for a feast is a celebration), of plenty (6b) and of shared delight (note the fivefold *all* in vs 6–8). Our Lord relished this festive prospect even as he handed a very different cup to his disciples (*cf.* Mt. 26:29).

The *shroud* or *sheet* (better, 'covering ... veil') could be either the mourning (8b) or the blindness (*cf.* 2 Cor. 3:15) of fallen humanity; both are apposite. The translation *for ever* (8a) is the most straightforward (*cf. e.g.* 28:28), but the root does also contain the idea of 'victory' (*cf.* 1 Cor. 15:54) or pre-eminence, and is so used in 1 Sa. 15:29 and 1 Ch. 29:11, where it appears as 'Glory' and 'majesty' respectively. In either sense, the promise is one of the summits of the OT and the NT. In a single verse (*cf.* also Rev. 21:4) the last enemy is gone and the last tear shed.

Revelation 21:1-6a

1 The creation of a *new heaven and new earth* is taught in Is. 65:17 and 66:22 (*cf.* Mt. 5:18; Mk. 13:31; 2 Pet. 3:12). Jewish teachers interpreted Is. 65–66 variously; some held that God would *renew* creation for his kingdom, others that he would *replace* it by an entirely new one. John's vision is capable of either interpretation; the fact that 20:11 describes a theophany, *i.e.* a pictorial representation of creation's response to God's coming for judgment, may be held to favour the former view. In any case, *there was no longer any sea* is less concerned with water than wickedness: the devil, the antichrist and antichristian empire are all depicted as sea monsters; nothing of that order survives into the new. **2** The imagery used in the portrayal of *the Holy City* here and in 21:9–22:5 fluctuates between the bride-city, as the context of life in the kingdom of God, and the fellowship of the redeemed with God. **3** This latter feature appears as the first and greatest blessing of the eternal kingdom. The term for *dwelling* is lit. 'tent'; it harks back to the tabernacle in the wilderness, on which the pillar of fire and cloud rested, the sign of God's presence and manifest glory. The same association of language is used in Jn. 1:14; in the new creation all that Immanuel signifies is forever fulfilled. **4** *Cf.* 7:17; Is. 25:8. **5** *I am making everything new* refers to God's action in the new creation, but it was begun in Christ's resurrection and is experienced by all believers in the present (2 Cor. 5:17). *It is done* echoes the cry on the cross (Jn. 19:30) and the voice from the throne (16:17). God is *the Alpha and the Omega*; his character guarantees the truth of this revelation. The added promise recalls Is. 55:1 (*cf.* also 22:17; Jn. 7:37–38).

John 11:32-44

Vs 28–37 portray first the reaction of Mary and then that of the Jews who had come to mourn with the sisters. Mary's part in the story can be summarized as follows: Jesus sent Martha for her (28); she immediately responded (29); she fell down at Jesus' feet and repeated the same statement that Martha had made; her tears brought distress to Jesus, who also wept (33–35). Mary is seen here as more emotional than Martha. Even the Jewish mourners add pathos to the

scene. They are shown as consoling Mary and following her to the tomb (31); as being touched by the sight of Jesus' tears (36); and as speculating on why Jesus had not prevented this sad happening. The climax is reached in the words *he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled* (33). The meaning of the word translated *deeply moved* implies anger and indignation, even outrage. A problem arises over the cause of this outburst. Some have suggested moral indignation at sin which causes death and at the sorrow which follows from it. But such indignation must have continually been in the mind of Jesus, whereas here there seems to be a specific occasion for such expression. Was this caused by the sympathy of Jesus for the sisters? The force of the verb seems to be too strong for that. Was it because of the unreality of the Jewish expression of grief? This is at least a possibility since any show of hypocrisy may well have aroused his anger. It may well be that something of the pathos of human suffering was bearing on Jesus as he knew that his own cup of suffering was so close. The troubling of his spirit proceeded from within. Perhaps it was his knowledge of the strength of unbelief of some of them, who would oppose him even after witnessing the raising of Lazarus. The question in v 37 links this present sign with that of the blind man in ch. 9. They granted the possibility of keeping a man from dying, but they could not conceive of a raising from the dead.

The account of the miracle is relatively brief and is marked by reserve, but all the details have about them the ring of truth. The words *Did I not tell you?* (40) relate to what Jesus had told the disciples, not Martha. But his words to Martha implied the same intention. Or else the words may be taken as addressing the disciples rather than as a response to Martha. The prayer of Jesus (41–42) is significant because of its emphasis on faith in his mission. The reserve in the account is particularly seen in the simple description of Lazarus coming out of the tomb.