

Trinity Reformed Church of Northwest Connecticut

Biblical, Traditional, Congregational

Lord's Day Worship for
December 15, 2024

*"I shall wash my hands in innocence, and I will go about Your altar,
O LORD, that I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving and declare
all Your wonders." – Psalm 26:6-7*



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“*” = Please stand if you are able.

Welcome, Greeting & Announcements

Call to Worship – Psalm 16

Leader: Preserve me, O God,

People: For I take refuge in Thee.

Leader: I said to the LORD, Thou art my Lord;

People: I have no good besides Thee.

Leader: As for the saints who are in the earth,

People: They are the majestic ones in whom is all my delight.

*Leader: The sorrows of those who have bartered for another god will be multiplied;
I shall not pour out their libations of blood,*

People: Nor shall I take their names upon my lips.

Leader: The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and my cup;

People: Thou dost support my lot.

Leader: The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places;

People: Indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me.

Leader: I will bless the LORD who has counseled me;

People: Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night.

Leader: I have set the LORD continually before me;

People: Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

Leader: Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;

People: My flesh also will dwell securely.

Leader: For Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol (the grave);

People: Neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay.

Leader: Thou wilt make known to me the path of life; In Thy presence is fullness of joy;

People: In Thy right hand there are pleasures forever.

Prayer of Invocation and Confession

Gospel Absolution Text – 1Corinthians 6:9-11

***Hymn #196** (red hymnal) – “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”

Scripture Reading – Zechariah 2:1-3:10

Ancient Creedal Reading – Apostles Creed (pg#845 in the red hymnal)

Offerings Presented

[Please put your tithe/offering in the plates before or after the service – Thank you!]
[Gifts labeled “Deacon’s Fund go to aid those in need in the congregation.]

*Doxology #731 (red hymnal)

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host: Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

*Prayer of Dedication

*Hymn #214 (red hymnal) – “Angels We Have Heard on High”

Prayers of the Church & Lord’s Prayer (sins)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Reformation Creedal Reading – Savoy Declaration, 31.1

Leader:	<i>The bodies of men, after death,</i>	Gen 3:19
People:	Return to dust, and see corruption	Acts 13:36
Leader:	<i>But their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence,</i>	Luke 23:43
People:	Immediately return to God who gave them:	Ecl 12:7
Leader:	<i>The souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness,</i>	Heb 12:23
People:	Are received into the highest heavens,	2Cor 5:1,6,8
Leader:	<i>Where they behold the face of God, in light and glory,</i>	Phil 1:23
People:	Waiting for the full redemption of their bodies.	Acts 3:21; Eph 4:10
Leader:	<i>And the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness,</i>	Luke 16:23-24 Acts 1:25; Jude 6-7
People:	Reserved to the judgment of the great day.	1Pet 3:19
Leader:	<i>Beside these two places, for souls separated from their bodies,</i>	
People:	The Scripture acknowledges none.	

Ministry of the Word

Prayer of Illumination

*Sermon Text – Revelation 6:9-11

*Gloria Patri #735 (red hymnal)

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning,
is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.*

Sermon – “Heaven”

(A Sermon Series on Revelation 4-7)

*Hymn #195 (red hymnal) – “Joy to the World!”

*Benediction – Numbers 6:24-26

Announcements

- There will be **no Sunday School** on **December 29th** and **January 5th**.
Church will start at the usual 10:30 AM and there will be Coffee Hour.
- **Tuesday Morning Study** is done for the year – It will return on **January 14th**.
- **Wednesday Evening Study** is done for the year – It will return on **January 15th**.
- YADG might meet on Friday, December 20th.
- Pastor Doug will be on vacation from December 23rd through January 6th.

Upcoming Events

- There will be a **TRC Game Night** on January 24th at 6:30 PM at Tanja's parents house at 409 Oak Avenue, Torrington (with a snow date at Jan 31st).
- Sledding in February?
- There will be a **Ladies Bingo & Pot-Luck Supper Night** on Friday, March 28th at 6:00 PM (with a snow date of Friday, April 4th) at the Gabelmanns' pool-house. All adult ladies are welcome!
- Easter is on April 20th.

Regular Weekly Events

<i>Sunday</i>	9:00 – c.10:00 AM	Sunday School Children's curriculum: KVB Publications Women's Study: Baucham's <u>Expository Apologetics</u> Adult Study: Westminster Larger Catechism Worship (Lord's Supper on the 1 st Sunday of the month) Coffee Hour Fellowship
	10:30 – c.11:40 AM c.11:40 AM	
<i>Tuesday</i>	10:30 AM – Noon	Tuesday Study (Evangelism in Acts) at Pastor Doug's house
<i>Wednesday</i>	6:30 – 8:00 PM	Wednesday Study (on Exodus) at Pastor Doug's house
<i>Friday</i>	6:30 - ??? PM	Young Adult Discussion Group at Pastor Doug's house (1 st & 3 rd Fridays)
<i>Saturday</i>	morning	Prayer Group at the Gabelmann's. (Please call Sheryl to confirm if the group is meeting that day, 860-309-7250.)

Trinity Reformed Church of Northwest Connecticut

Worship Starts At: 10:30 AM (9:30 AM in the summer)

Sunday Worship At: Winchester Grange (100 Newfield Rd; Winchester Center, CT 06098)

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 343; Riverton, CT 06065 – Phone: (860) 238-7399

Webpage: trinityreformedct.org – Email: trinityreformedct@gmail.com

ONLINE RESOURCES

TRC's Webpage:	TrinityReformedCT.org
TRC's Facebook Page:	facebook.com/people/Trinity-Reformed-Church/61554974150922/
TRC's Youtube Channel:	youtube.com/@TrinityReformedCT
Pastor Doug's	youtube.com/simplyreformed
Youtube Channels:	youtube.com/@PilgrimsOfPlunder

INTERNET PRAYER CHAIN

If you have any prayer requests for our prayer chain, please email them to Donna Ensminger at: trcnwprayer@gmail.com. (If you would like to join the Prayer Chain, also see Donna.)

LEADERSHIP

Elders:	Rev. Douglas Aldrich, pastor	860-379-1147	douglas_aldrich@sbcglobal.net
	Bob Ensminger	860-485-8738	robert.ensminger@arthurgrossell.com
	Rich Gabelmann	860-605-7852	rgabelmann0415@gmail.com
	Rev. Jonathan Haulenbeek	203-709-0784	jhaulenbeek@icloud.com
Deacons:	David Mattson (chair), Carl Bierce, Caleb Goodell, Mason Goodell, Dean Winters		
Sunday School:	Verna Aldrich, Mason Goodell	Music Coordinator:	Cindy Rines
Clerk:	Sheryl Gabelmann	Treasurer:	Cindy Rines

Sermon Notes

"Heaven"

Revelation 6:9-11

A Sermon Series on Revelation 4-7

December 15, 2024

Introduction

- 1) What is heaven like?
 - a) In our popular culture it has something to do with getting wings, being at peace as we float around on clouds playing harps wearing white.
 - b) There are biblical echoes in that image, however, we need to think about this.
- 2) As we learned last week, the core biblical doctrines of "last things" (i.e. eschatology) teach that there are two places that await those in Christ:
 - a) The souls of those righteous when they die in this age (i.e. right now) go to be with God spiritually in heaven. Eccles 12:7;
Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59
 - b) There will be a time in the future, "*until the period of restoration of all things*" (Acts 3:21), at the end of this age when the Lord Jesus returns in power and glory, where we will get new bodies and go into the eternal perfect new heavens and new earth. Matt 25:31ff;
John 5:22,27;
Acts 17:31;
Rev 20:11-13
- 3) Revelation 6:9-11, today's sermon text, is one of the best texts about the heaven that awaits the saints who die in Christ right now.
 - a) A quick read describes that we will be underneath an altar calling for vengeance.
 - b) Is that what heaven is really like?
 - c) Let's ponder.

Review of Revelation

- 1) Revelation is a series of visions given to the elderly Apostle John around the year 95 AD while he is in exile, because of the faith, on the island of Patmos. Rev 1:9
 - a) This is apocalyptic literature – The heavenly visions are described in symbolic language.
 - i) It is not an allegory or a fictional story with spiritual truths.
 - ii) Nor is it meant to be taken in a hyper-literal way.
 - iii) It's less about items and more about relation with God.
 - b) For example, the Holy Spirit is described as “the Seven Spirits”. Rev 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6
 - i) Not that there are literally seven Holy Spirits. Is 63:10-11; John 14:26
 - ii) But seven shows the completeness of the Holy Spirit and the power of His presence. Is 11:2
- 2) There are two critical things to remember about reading Revelation:
 - a) First, as verse one teaches, the Book is a revealing, literally an “*apocalypse*” in the Greek, of Jesus Christ. Rev 1:1
 - b) Second, Revelation is written to comfort and call to faithfulness the tiny new Christian church that is being persecuted by the Roman Empire. Rev 1:3ff
 - c) If you are not first and foremost focused on Christ, and His spiritual body on earth – the church, especially giving comfort to the first precipitants of this book in the 1st century, then you are reading Revelation wrong.
- 3) In Revelation 4, the Apostle John, and his hearers, are granted to see the big cosmic picture, to see into the highest heavens.
 - a) There God the Father is enthroned and His Son, the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, is opening up a seven sealed scroll revealing and executing God's plan.
 - b) The first four seals bring forth the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse:
 - i) The 1st Horseman, on a white horse, is Jesus Christ Himself going forth to conquer with His Gospel, getting the saints, through this age. Rev 6:1-2
 - ii) Because of the fallen nature of this world persecution follows the Gospel as seen by the next three horsemen.
 - iii) The 2nd Horseman, on a red horse, is violence against the saints. Rev 6:3-4
 - iv) The 3rd Horseman, on a black horse, is economic hardship against the saints. Rev 6:5-6
 - v) The 4th Horseman, on an ashen horse, is death, and the martyrdom, of the saints. Rev 6:7-8
- 4) Such persecution can be endured because:
 - a) This is part of God's bigger plan – as ordered from the scroll.
 - b) It is part of Christ conquering – yes there are causalities but the battle is being won.
 - c) The breaking of the 5th Seal brings comfort.

The 5th Seal – Word & Altar – Revelation 6:9

- 1) What happens to the saints who die because of the 4th Horseman? Because of martyrdom? Because of the death?

- 2) The Lord Jesus, the Lamb, breaks the 5th Seal and John sees “*underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained*”. – Revelation 6:9b
- a) At the very least, these are clearly the martyrs, who have been slain because they remained faithful to the Word of God.
 - b) This is also a general description that applies to all the saints in heaven. Rev 20:1ff
 - c) And helps us to understand what heaven is like, right now.
- 3) The Word of God is literally Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of God who John 1:1-5,14,18
became incarnate (Christmas!), died, raised and now reigns in heaven. Rev 19:13
- a) We learn about this Word by reading the written word of God, the Scriptures. Matt 22:31
 - b) You cannot divide Jesus from the Scriptures! John 5:39ff
You cannot claim one and deny the other!
- 4) These martyrs “maintained”, remained faithful, to the Word, thus bearing testimony, giving witness, even to the point of death.
- a) By the way, the word “*testimony*” in Rev 6:9, in Greek, is “*μαρτυρία (martyria)*”, where we get the English word “martyr” (to die for/because of the faith).
 - b) Calling the saints to remain faithful is one of the major themes of Revelation, and of all the Bible, especially books like Hebrews and 1Peter.
- 5) But why are they “*underneath the altar*”?
- a) Reading that in a hyper-literal way is of course wrong.
 - b) The symbolic meaning of the altar, however, teaches powerfully of the saints testimony/witness and the hope all Christians have.
- 6) Altars are a place of worship.
- a) The Hebrew word for “*altar*” means “*a place of slaughter of sacrifice.*” Ex 20:24
 - i) Remember that in OT times the focus of worship was sacrifice of animals and plant offerings.
 - ii) This is fulfilled by the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who is both the perfect High Priest and the perfect sacrifice.
 - iii) Note that Jesus is called the Lamb throughout Revelation.
 - b) Altars were also a place to remind the people of God. Josh 22:26-29
 - c) Sometimes altars were seen as a place of refuge. 1Kgs 1:50-51; 2:28
- 7) Simple altars were built early on in the Old Testament.¹
- 8) With the Tabernacle, God’s House in the OT, there were two priestly altars: Ex 40:5-6
- a) **Altar of Burnt Offering:** Was in the front of the entrance of the Tabernacle and used for the daily burnt and meal offerings. Ex 27:1-8; 40:6
Lev 1:1-17
 - i) Burnt offerings were the frequent form of sacrifice in the OT. Gen 4:3-4; 8:20; 22:2,7-8,13;
Ex 10:25

¹ Such as: Noah after the flood (Gen 8:20). Abraham at Shechem (Gen 12:7), Bethel & Ai (Gen 12:8), Hebron (Gen 13:18), Moriah (Gen 22:9) and Beersheba (Gen 26:25). Jacob restored the altars at Shechem (Gen 33:20) and Bethel (Gen 35:1,3). Saul built an altar during the conquest of the Philistines (1Sam 14:35). David built an altar on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the future location of the Temple (2Sam 24:15-25; 2Chr 3:1). When Israel returned from captivity in Babylon one of the first things they did was to build an altar (Ezra 3:3).

- ii) Used to make atonement for sin and played a major role in public worship and as a rite of cleansing. Num 28-29; Lev 12:6-8; Lev 14:19,22; 15:15,30; Lev 16:24
- iii) Leviticus 14:20 – *“The priest shall offer up the burnt offering and the grain offering on the altar. Thus the priest shall make atonement for him, and he will be clean.”*
- iv) This altar declares that to go before the holy God required sacrificial atonement for sin. Lev 1:4; 9:7; 14:20,31; 15:15,30 Num 8:12; Ezek 45:15-17
- b) **Altar of Incense:** (the “Golden Altar”) Was further inside the Tabernacle and just before the veil that separated the most holy place and the rest of the worship area. Ex 30:1-10; Ex 37:10-29; Ex 40:5,6-27
 - i) Priests burned incense on this altar every day as a fragrant offering unto to God. 1Kgs 6:20, 22; 7:48
 - ii) Exodus 30:6-7 – *“You shall put this altar in front of the veil that is near the ark of the testimony, in front of the mercy seat that is over the ark of the testimony, where I will meet with you. Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it; he shall burn it every morning when he trims the lamps.”*
- 9) In Revelation there is only one altar – It is about the centrality of worship and where God’s power and judgment goes forth from. Rev 6:9; 8:3,5; 9:13 Rev 11:1; 14:18; 16:7
 - a) The altar in Revelation is a combination of both OT altars
 - b) It refers to the Altar of Burnt Offerings because their blood has been poured out as a sacrificial offering unto God, showing their faith, commitment and testimony. Lev 4:7; 17:11,14 Rev 6:10
 - c) It refers to the Altar of Incense as their faith being a pleasing aroma to God.
 - i) This altar is clearly shown in the heavenly Temple. Is 6:6; Rev 8:3-5
 - ii) The supreme offering is Christ, whom we imitate.
 - iii) Ephesians 5:2 – *“and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”*
- 10) Just like Jesus was slaughtered/slain, so too are the martyrs, and so also just like Christ now lives and reigns as do the saints. Rev 5:6,9,12; Rev 6:4,9; 18:4
- 11) The focus of the altar texts here in Revelation is about how special the life of the saints are to God.
 - a) That their whole lives are a pleasing offering unto God and are special before God.
 - b) Just like the same group is described as being on thrones and reigning in Rev 20:4.

The 5th Seal – Cry For Justice – Revelation 6:10

- 1) The saints at the heavenly altar cried out with a loud voice, saying, *“How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”* – Revelation 6:10b
 - a) Crying loudly to the Lord is a common, and acceptable, form of prayer during times of distress. Num 11:2; Judg 3:9; Job 30:20; Ps 3:4; 107:6; 130:1; 142:1; Hab 1:2; Matt 27:50
 - i) The Lord Jesus, Himself, did so when He died, and He was without sin.
 - ii) Matthew 27:50 – *“And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.”*

- b) Crying out “how long” is a common refrain of God’s people when facing suffering. Ps 6:3; 13:1-2; 35:17; 62:3; 74:9-10; 79:5; Ps 80:4; 89:46; 90:13; 94:3; Hab 1:2; Zech 1:12
- c) God will avenge the blood of His servants. Deut 32:43; 2Kgs 9:7; Ps 79:10
- d) And God promises justice to those who cry out to Him. Luke 18:7
- 2) Is this crying out desiring judgment and to be avenged appropriate, especially in heaven?
- a) Didn’t the Lord Jesus tell us to turn the other cheek and love our enemies? Matt 5:38-48
- i) That even on the cross the Lord prayed for those that murdered Him, “*Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.*” – Luke 23:34b
- ii) Just like Stephen the first martyr in Acts did. Acts 7:59-60
- b) *Answer:* No contradiction whatsoever.
- c) They are not taking revenge into their own hands, or asking for private vengeance, but are asking for God for public justice, that the Lord judge righteously and vindicate them.
- d) There has to be justice if God is holy and good, and thus the cross as the only means of forgiveness. Lev 19:2 Acts 4:12
- e) The word for “avenging” here (ἐκδικέω, *ekdikeō*), literally “extension of righteousness” can mean either “to take revenge” and/or “to give justice, to grant a fair verdict” depending the context. Luke 18:3,5; Rom 12:19; 2Cor 10:6; Rev 6:10; 19:2
- i) Let’s be blunt, we moderns in America really have no experience with this level of persecution. (Praise God for His mercy!)
- ii) It’s easy to be (faux) pious when life is easy.
- iii) To be truly merciful under severe persecution is a sign of great faith.
- iv) And mercy and justice go together.
- f) 1Peter 2:23 – “*and while being reviled, He (Jesus) did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously*”
- g) Remember to read all of Romans 12:14-21.²
- 3) The focus of Revelation 6:10 is *not* that we will be crying out for revenge in heaven.
- a) The focus is that the saints in heaven are interceding for us (Christians in this world) and that should bring us great comfort.
- b) I love how that great hymn, “*The Church is One Foundation*” puts it: “*Mid toil and tribulation, and tumult of her war, she waits the consummation of peace for evermore; Till, with the vision glorious, her longing eyes are blest, and the great Church victorious shall be the Church at rest. Yet she on earth hath union with God the Three in One, and mystic sweet communion with those whose rest is won: O happy ones and holy! Lord, give us grace that we, like them, the meek and lowly, in love may dwell with Thee.*”
- c) And, these martyrs in heaven do get an answer and get rest.

² “*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. ‘But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”*

The 5th Seal – Clothed In White – Revelation 6:11

- 1) Revelation 6:11 – *“And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.”*
- 2) They are given white robes. (Note, they are given!)
 - a) White throughout the Bible, and especially in Revelation, is the symbol of holiness.
 - i) For God and His Son. Rev 1:14; 6:2; 14:14; 19:11,14; 20:11
 - ii) For angels. Mark 16:5; Acts 1:10
 - b) Showing that they are priests, special unto the Lord, like all Christians. Ex 28:2; 29:29; 35:19,21; Lev 16:32; Is 61:6; 66:21; 1Pet 2:5,9; Rev 1:6
 - i) It is a sign of being chosen. Rev 2:17
 - ii) That having white clothing is a sign of being made holy/clean, that one is faithful, and is reigning now in heaven. Rev 3:4-5,18; Rev 4:4; 6:11; Rev 7:9,13-14
 - c) They have been made perfect, without sin, and sin and death can no longer touch them.
 - d) Revelation 12:11-12 – *“And they overcame him (Satan, the prince of this world) because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time.”*
- 3) These martyrs are told to rest.
 - a) Not in the sense they go to sleep but they are now perfect and are at home with the Lord.

Revelation 14:13 – *“And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, Write, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on! Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.’”*
 - b) They are to “rest for a little while longer”, why?

Revelation 6:11b – *“Until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.”*
- 4) The reason for their suffering is that God is getting all the saints throughout this age.
 - a) 2Peter 3:8-9 - *“But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved (i.e. Christians), that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you (the original Christians that received 1Peter 2,000+ years ago), not wishing for any (all the elect throughout this age) to perish but for all (the elect) to come to repentance.”*
 - b) These are the last days because we have the final revelation from God in His Son. Heb 1:1-2; 9:26; 1Pet 1:19-21
 - c) The Day is near.
 - i) This brings even more judgment to those who refuse to repent. Rev 2:21
 - ii) It brings repentance to the righteous by putting them in Christ causing us to remain faithful and to be charitable. Rom 2:4; 13:11-14; Heb 10:34-37

Conclusion

- 1) What is heaven like?
 - a) Do we have wings? No, we do not become angels.
 - b) Is it peaceful? Yes, we have perfect rest by and in Christ. Rev 6:11
 - c) Are there clouds? In the sense it is a spiritual place until the New Heavens and New Earth, yes. Rev 11:12
 - d) Do we have harps? Yes, in the sense we are granted to worship and glorify God perfectly for all eternity, yes. Rev 5:8; 14:2-3; 15:2ff
 - e) Do we have white clothing? Yes, in the sense we are now made clean and greatly valued.
- 2) Notice the difference between the worldly false view of heaven and the biblical one: God.
- 3) Heaven is about going to be with God which is only through the work of Christ.
 - a) It is to go into paradise. Luke 23:43
 - b) It is to go home. 2Cor 5:8
 - c) It is only through Christ - *"I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture."* – John 10:9