

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.

"Has to be dog friendly...Looking for someone who is employed, clean, responsible, and cleans up after themselves." "Would love someone who is respectful and easy to get along with. Absolutely NO drug use of any kind allowed." "Must love cats, no pets of your own please! Must have your own phone! Must be gainfully employed."

Can you tell what I was just reading? Those are some ads I found on Craigslist for people looking for a person to live with them, telling what they want in a potential roommate. You know, it's so easy to think if I put what I'm looking for in an ad, the right person is going to fall right into my lap, the perfect roommate. Well, I'm sure you can all think of horror stories of your own roommates, or maybe a friend, where it just was the worst pairing ever. Or, maybe after months and months of searching for just the right person, you finally just have to settle with what you can get, someone, anyone to help pay the rent.

Can the absolutely perfect roommate ever be found? I know what the apostle John's answer would be. Of course. We see that today. Our Risen Lord Reveals Himself to Us! He's the perfect roommate waiting to room with us!

By now, hopefully you've begun to get comfortable with the way the apostle John writes and how he presents heaven in Revelation...with his visions. Over the last couple of weeks, John has given us a close-up view of the throne room of heaven and the joyous celebration that's taking place there, as the saints, believers from all time, from all nations, together with the angels and all the hosts of heaven, as they all lift their voices to praise the Lamb who was slain, Jesus, our victorious Lord and King!

Today, we're at the end of Revelation, looking at his final vision, where John zooms out a bit so we can see what's waiting for us...our heavenly home. And what a beautiful piece of property it is.

A far cry from what God's not just renting out, but what he makes the permanent residence for those who reject Christ, only to hang out with the archenemy, Satan...for all eternity. Here's how John describes it: "*And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.* ¹³ *The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done.* ¹⁴ *Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.* ¹⁵ *Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.*"

Wow, talk about a place that is literally a "hellhole." A lake of fire, that's how hell is portrayed. As a prison full of punishment and intense and unending suffering. Pretty scary, isn't it?

But what's in heaven is nothing like it. Listen to what John tells us about the place waiting for you and me: "*Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea."*

A new heaven and a new earth. Now, I'm guessing that brings up a good question...is John being literal or figurative here? Is this his painting of heaven or is this a real snapshot? Will heaven be like a new heaven and a new earth, where it will be like this earth we have come to enjoy during our lives here, take your favorite parts and it will be there? Or, will God literally take this earth we are living on, and at Judgment Day he will cleanse his creation here, wiping out not only the unbelievers, but every imperfection in nature as well, completely destroying the earth and starting out with a fresh canvass and making this the new Garden of Eden for you and me to live in?

That's a little difficult to answer, but you know what, for our eternity, it doesn't matter. Regardless, it's going to be new...perfect. No matter what, it's going to be our dream house.

It'll also be a place where there won't be any seas. Now, that seems like an arbitrary feature for John to mention, but just think about it a moment. What is the sea, the ocean to you and me today? It represents danger and it's something that causes separation. Those bodies of water are a place where ships wreck, enemies lurk, and the sheer vastness of them can separate loved ones, making it nearly impossible to be with each other.

In heaven, they won't be there because they cannot and will not separate us from our eternal Roommate, God. No, Jesus' life, death, and resurrection has done away with that sea of sin forever.

That is the home awaiting us, the rooms, the mansions (as the KJV would say) our risen Lord tells us he is preparing for us right now.

And soon enough, we will be there. John mentions us, the "Holy City, the New Jerusalem." When our room is prepared, then there Jesus will bring us, those made holy by his blood, us, his Jerusalem, a name which literally means city of peace. Us, at true peace because the victory is won! Jesus lives. Our Lord reigns!

Now, if you look at our verses again, can you see one other way John details our heavenly home? "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God." Or, literally, instead of dwelling, God will tent with us.

Now, I don't know what your feelings are towards camping. I know the idea of a tent has no appeal to my mom and my sister-in-law. To them, sleeping on the ground is disgusting. Is that really what our house in heaven is going to be? Certainly doesn't seem like the perfect room, right?

But don't think of it that. Think of a different tent, in the Old Testament, the Tabernacle. As the Israelites wandered through the wilderness, the Tabernacle went with them. That tent was their place of worship. They faithfully set it up in the middle of their camp wherever they stopped. And that was the place where God told them he would dwell among them. The Tabernacle was the sign they were in God's presence, surely a great comfort and blessing to them.

So now in heaven, God has his tent set up. He promises a place where he will be among his people and dwell with them forever, a comfort and a blessing to the saints in heaven, God's roommates.

Now, can you guess what God's "roommate wanted" ad looks like for this luxurious heavenly mansion, far greater than anything we could imagine or hope for? Well, let's see. He doesn't care about pets. Certainly doesn't need someone who's going to root for the same sports team. He doesn't even have to have someone who enjoys the same genre of music or the same TV shows as he does. He really has only one requirement, which he tells us in the Bible: "Be holy because I the LORD your God am holy," or as Jesus also said, "Be perfect...as your heavenly Father is perfect."

And if you're not quite sure what that entails, Jesus breaks down that prerequisite even more... "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind...Love your neighbor as yourself." And if it's still not clicking, he specifies it even further, "You shall have no other gods. Don't use God's name in vain...Remember the Sabbath...Do not murder, do not steal, do not lust, do not covet, do not gossip."

God's perfect roommate is someone who doesn't sin. It's someone who follows his laws and his commands and never deviates. It's someone who is perfect. That someone is not me...that's not you, either. We can't even get along with the roommates we have here in this life, or in the relationships we have with others.

With my wife, the heated exchanges and unloving arguments we have with each other...I've said some hurtful things to her, even though God tells me to "be kind and compassionate", for us to forgive each other.

Maybe it's your brother or sister, always thinking they know best, telling you what to do, or they're successful and you're not and they flaunt it in your face and you resent them for it, harbor anger in your hearts against them.

Or maybe it's your friend or your co-working, who you lash out against for really no good reason other than you had a bad day at work or at home and you need to take out your frustrations on someone.

Talk about not being a good roommate. Just imagine how much worse we are for God, who doesn't want anything but perfection. But I'm the lazy roommate who can't pick up after myself and take care of the blessings God has given me, being selfish with my possessions. I'm the inconsiderate roommate whose whole world revolves around me, doesn't matter if my sins bother God...I'm going to keep doing it if I want to.

I'm the sinful roommate who has no place being in heaven with God because he's perfect and I'm not. He's loving towards me and I'm hateful towards him. He's generous with me and I'm greedy with me. The perfect roommate? Me? Oh no, not even close. No, I'm a sinner, one who deserves to live in the lake of fire, not in the mansions of heaven, but in the prison of hell.

You know, it's hard to imagine anyone being able to be the perfect roommate, spiritually, mostly because we know we don't fit the bill ourselves...far from it. But do you really think God would want to just throw us out on our butts, or even worse, cast us off to the fires of hell, away from him forever? No, he doesn't. So, for us imperfect roommates, God sent us the perfect roommate...Jesus.

Do you see how our Roommate reveals himself in our verses here? I'll give you a hint. "...prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. Talk about the perfect roommate...married couples, how about your best friend...your groom? That's who our perfect Roommate is...the loving husband...our heavenly groom.

Ephesians shows what the perfect roommate did for us. *"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as the radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless."*

You see, the perfect roommate wants to live with us, so he did what needed to be done so we could be eternal bunkmates. He gave himself up for us. What God requires for residence in heaven, perfection, Jesus did all that. As the groom, he loves us, his bride. So, he lived his earthly life for us...without any sin. But he wasn't satisfied with him being the only one who could satisfy God's requirements for heaven. So he satisfied those perfect requirements for us as well. He gave himself up, took our sins, and washed them away by the blood he shed on the cross. He made sure we are completely forgiven by rising from the dead, the sign that sin is defeated for good.

Yes, because Jesus lived, Jesus died, and Jesus rose, our sins are gone. Because of our perfect roommate, God's requirements for heaven have been satisfied in full. And now, because of our heavenly Groom, your spot in your home in heaven, in your forever home, is being prepared for you.

Jesus, the groom is eagerly getting everything ready for us, his bride, now, really the perfect roommate for him because he has made us that way. He has made us pure. And, boy, are we looking forward to that day when the "engagement" period will be done, and we'll be married to our heavenly groom, and our Savior will carry us over the threshold of heaven to live with him in glory, in paradise forever.

You know, in our verses, Jesus talks about making everything new. Our future home, that's not all that will be new. But that relationship with our roommate, our groom, that will be new, too. In that relationship, the filthy rags we wear now, covered with our sins, those we will shed for a beautiful wedding dress, the robes of righteousness cleansed by Jesus blood, never to be stained with sin again. In that relationship, our Roommate will show nothing but love to us, and we'll reciprocate that same love as we praise him and worship him and serve him all our days. What a joy that will be!

You know, if you were looking for that perfect roommate, you have your list of everything he/she must be, you probably will never find anyone who will be the perfect match. But in heaven, it's a different story. The perfect Roommate, Jesus, is already there, waiting for us. And us? Now, we might not look like anything great here on earth, but because of Jesus, we'll be a perfect match in heaven. So as a bride excitedly, even impatiently waits for the wedding day to come, we are just as anxious for our groom to finally come, take us home to our dream house. He'll be a joy to live with, and thankfully, we'll be with him forever. Amen.