

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

BY REV. WILLIAM AITKEN, SMITH'S FALLS.

(Concluded from page 313.)

But we are to conceive of heaven not only as a distinct place, and as a place of saintly society, but,

3rd. *As a place of rest and joy.*

The language of the text implies an occasion of festive rejoicing. The representation which it gives of the redeemed is that of a multitude coming from the east and west, and reclining—as at a banquet, after the manner of the ancients—with the illustrious patriarchs, with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. Now, whatever in this figurative representation may be deemed unsuitable to the pure spirituality of the heavenly world, at any rate it obviously conveys the ideas of *rest and joy*.

In that heavenly world there will be the entire absence of everything that can occasion uneasiness or disquietude, the entire absence of everything incompatible with the experience of a perfect rest. In this respect that which is imperfect shall be done away, that which is perfect shall have come.

In this present world the grand causes of unrest, whether of body or of mind, are sin and the death which is by sin, and the various forms of mortal suffering; all more or less directly attributable to sin, and testifying to its dire malignity. But these causes will not operate, will have no existence, in heaven. *There* there will be no more sin and therefore no more death—“no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain,” nor anything whereby an undisturbed rest might be precluded.

But the felicity of the redeemed in the world above will be far from being of this

purely negative character only—far from consisting merely in exemption from present ill. In heaven not only will there be perfect rest but fulness of joy. What, indeed, can be wanting to the measure of their felicity who have God Himself for their portion—God Himself exercising on their behalf the boundless infinitude of his power to bless? What happiness of which their nature is susceptible, and which God can bestow, will not be theirs?

And to crown all, that freedom from all that can produce disturbance or inquietude—that unmixed and perfect positive blessedness, which will be realized by the redeemed in the heavenly places, will be *eternal*. Unlike the best enjoyments peculiar to earth, this blessedness will be subject to no fluctuation or vicissitude, and will never end. The pleasures of those who dwell with God above will be pleasures for evermore. “The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion”—the heavenly Zion—“with songs and everlasting joy on their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

How glorious a consummation to the experiences of this present life, with its highest happiness so chequered and unsatisfying, with its incessant conflicts and trials! How worthy to engage our earnest desires, and to call forth and sustain our persevering endeavours! How richly fraught, in the believing anticipation, with consolation and peace amid all the ills which so darkly gather around us here! How light becomes all present affliction when compared with that future glory.