

cere; aiming, in them all, at the glory of the Lord, a testimony of your love to him, and in obedience to his command. Leave it to hypocrites, who have their reward, to proclaim every man his own goodness; and to sound a trumpet when they do their alms. It is a base and unchristian spirit, which cannot have satisfaction in a good work unless it be exposed to the view of others: it is utterly unworthy of one who believes that the last trumpet shall call together the whole world, before whom the Judge himself shall publish works truly good, how secretly soever they were done. Live in a believing expectation of the coming of the Lord. Let your loins be always girt, and your lamps burning; so when he comes, whether in the last day of your life, or in the last day of the world, ye shall be able to say with joy, "Lo, this is our God, and we have waited for him."

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## PART V.

### THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

*Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.—MATT. XXV. 34.*

HAVING, from this portion of Scripture, which the text is a part of, discoursed of the general judgment; and being to speak of the everlasting happiness of the saints, and the everlasting misery of the wicked, from the respective sentences to be pronounced upon them in the great day, I shall take them in the order wherein they lie before us; and the rather that, as sentence is first passed upon the righteous, so the execution thereof is first begun, though probably the other may be fully executed before it is completed.

The words of the text contain the joyful sentence itself, together with an historical introduction thereto, which gives us an account of the Judge pronouncing the sentence, "the King," Jesus Christ; the parties on whom it is given, "them on his right hand;" and the time when, "then," as soon as the trial is over. Of these I have spoken already. It is the sentence itself we are now to consider, "Come, ye blessed of my Father," &c. Stand back, O ye profane goats! away all unregenerate souls, not united to Jesus Christ! this is not for you. Come, O ye saints, brought out of your natural state into the state of grace! behold here the state of glory awaiting you.

Here is glory let down to us in words and syllables; a looking-glass, in which you may see your everlasting happiness; a scheme or draught of Christ's Father's house, wherein there are many mansions.

This glorious sentence bears two things. 1. The complete happiness to which the saints are adjudged, "the kingdom." 2. Their solemn admission to it, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit," &c.—1. Their complete happiness is a kingdom. A kingdom is the top of worldly felicity; there is nothing on earth greater than a kingdom: therefore the hidden weight of the glory in heaven is held forth to us under that notion. But it is not an ordinary kingdom, it is "the kingdom;" the kingdom of heaven, surpassing all the kingdoms of the earth in glory, honour, profit, and pleasure, infinitely more than they do in these excel the low and inglorious condition of a beggar in rags, and on a dunghill. 2. There is a solemn admission of the saints into this their kingdom, "Come ye, inherit the kingdom." In view of angels, men, and devils, they are invested with royalty, and solemnly inaugurated before the whole world, by Jesus Christ, the heir of all things, who hath "all power in heaven and in earth." Their right to the kingdom is solemnly recognised and owned. They are admitted to it as undoubted heirs of the kingdom, to possess it by inheritance, or lot, as the word properly signifies, because, of old, inheritances were designed by lot, as Canaan to Israel, God's "first-born," as they are called, *Exod. iv. 22*. And because this kingdom is the Father's kingdom, therefore they are openly acknowledged, in their admission to it, to be the blessed of Christ's Father: which blessing was given them long before this sentence, but it is now solemnly recognised and confirmed to them by the Mediator, in his Father's name. It is observable, he says not, Ye blessed of the Father, but, Ye blessed of my Father; to shew us, that all blessings are derived by us from the Father, the fountain of blessing, as he is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," through whom we are blessed, *Eph. i. 3*. And, finally, they are admitted to this kingdom, as that which was "prepared for them from the foundation of the world," in God's eternal purpose, before they, or any of them, were; that all the world may see eternal life to be the free gift of God.

**DOCTRINE.** The saints shall be made completely happy in the possession of the kingdom of heaven.

Two things I shall here inquire into: I. The nature of this kingdom. II. The admission of the saints thereto. And then I shall make some practical improvement of the whole.

1. As to the nature of the kingdom of heaven, our knowledge of it is very imperfect; for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," 1 Cor. ii. 9. As, by familiar resemblances, parents instruct their little children concerning things of which otherwise they can have no tolerable notion; so our gracious God, in consideration of our weakness, is pleased to represent to us heaven's happiness under similitudes taken from earthly things, glorious in the eyes of men; since discoveries of the heavenly glory, divested of earthly resemblances, would be too bright for our weak eyes, and we should but lose ourselves in them. Wherefore now we can but speak as children of these things, which the day will fully discover.

The state of glory is represented under the idea of a kingdom; a kingdom, among men, being that in which the greatest number of earthly good things centre. Now, every saint shall, as a king, inherit a kingdom. All Christ's subjects shall be kings, each one with his crown upon his head: not that the great King shall divest himself of his royalty, but he will make all his children partakers of his kingdom.

1. The saints shall have kingly power and authority given them. Our Lord gives not empty titles to his favourites; he makes them kings indeed. The dominion of the saints will be a dominion far exceeding that of the greatest monarch who ever was on earth. They will be absolute masters over sin, which had the dominion over them. They will have a complete rule over their own spirits; an entire management of all their affections and inclinations, which now create them so much molestation: the turbulent root of corrupt affections shall be for ever expelled out of that kingdom, and never be able any more to give them the least disturbance. They shall have power over the nations, the ungodly of all nations, "and shall rule them with a rod of iron," Rev. ii. 26, 27. The whole world of the wicked shall be broken before them: "Satan shall be bruised under their feet," Rom. xvi. 20. He shall never be able to fasten a temptation on them any more: but he will be judged by them; and, in their sight, cast with the reprobate crew into the lake of fire and brimstone. So shall they rule over their oppressors. Having fought the good fight, and got the victory, Christ will entertain them as Joshua did his captains, causing them to "come near, and put their feet on the necks of kings," John. x. 24.

2. They shall have the ensigns of royalty. For a throne, Christ will grant them "to sit with him in his throne," Rev. iii. 21. They will be advanced to the highest honour and dignity that they are

capable of; and in the enjoyment of it, they will have an eternal undisturbed repose, after all the tossings which they met with in the world, in their way to the throne. For a crown, they shall "receive a crown of glory, that fadeth not away," 1 Pet. v. 4. Not a crown of flowers, as subjects, being conquerors or victors, sometimes have got: such a crown quickly fades, but their crown never fadeth. Not a crown of gold, such as earthly kings wear: even a crown of gold is often stained, and at best can never make those who wear it happy. But it shall be "a crown of glory." A crown of glory is "a crown of life," Rev. iii. 10, that life which knows no end: a crown which death can never make to fall off one's head. It must be an abiding crown; for it is a "crown of righteousness," 2 Tim. iv. 8. It was purchased for them by "Christ's righteousness," which is imputed to them; they are qualified for it by inherent righteousness; God's righteousness, or faithfulness, secures it to them. They shall have "a sceptre, a rod of iron," Rev. ii. 27, terrible to all the wicked world. And a sword too, "a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people," Psalm cxlix. 6, 7. They shall have royal apparel. The royal robes in this kingdom are white robes, Rev. iii. 4, "They shall walk with me in white." Which, in a very particular manner, points at the inconceivable glory of the state of the saints in heaven.

The Lord is pleased often to represent unto us the glorious state of the saints, by speaking of them as clothed in "white garments." It is promised to the conqueror, that he shall be "clothed in white raiment," Rev. iii. v. The elders about the throne are "clothed in white raiment," chap. iv. 4. The multitude before the throne are "clothed with white robes," chap. vii. 9; "arrayed in white robes," ver. 13; "made white in the blood of the Lamb," ver. 14. I own, the last two testimonies respect the state of the saints on earth; yet the terms are borrowed from the state of the church in heaven. All garments, properly so called, being badges of sin and shame, shall be laid aside by the saints when they come to their state of glory. But if we consider on what occasions white garments were wont to be put on, we shall find much of heaven under them.

(1.) The Romans, when they made their bond-servants free, gave them a white garment as a badge of their freedom. So shall the saints that day receive their white robes; for it is the day of "the glorious liberty of the children of God," Rom. viii. 21, the day of "the redemption of their body," ver. 23. They shall no more see the house of bondage, nor lie any more among the pots. If we com-

pare the state of the saints on earth with that of the wicked, it is indeed a state of freedom, whereas the other is a state of slavery : but, in comparison with their state in heaven, it is but a servitude. A saint on earth is indeed a young prince, and heir to the crown ; but his motto may be, " I serve ;" " for he differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all," Gal. iv. 1. What are the groans of a saint, the sordid and base work which he is sometimes found employed in, the black and tattered garments which he walks in, but badges of this comparative servitude ? But from the day the saints come to the crown, they receive their complete freedom, and serve no more. They shall be fully freed from sin, which of all evils is the worst, both in itself, and in their apprehension too ; how great then must that freedom be, when these " Egyptians, whom they see to-day," they " shall see them again no more for ever !" They shall be free from all temptation to sin : Satan can have no access to tempt them any more, by himself, or by his agents. A full answer will then be given to that petition they have so often repeated, " Lead us not into temptation." No hissing serpent can come into the paradise above : no snare or trap can be laid there, to catch the feet of the saints : they may walk there without fear, for they can be in no hazard : there are no lions' dens, no mountains of leopards, in the promised land. Nay, they shall be set beyond the possibility of sinning, for they shall be confirmed in goodness. It will be the consummate freedom of their will, to be for ever unalterably determined to good. And they shall be freed from all the effects of sin : " There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain," Rev. xxi. 4. What kingdom is like unto this ? Death makes its way now into a palace, as easily as into a cottage : sorrow fills the heart of one who wears a crown on his head : royal robes are no defence against pain, and crying by reason of pain. But in this kingdom no misery can have place. All reproaches shall be wiped off ; and never shall a tear drop any more from their eyes. They shall not complain of desertions again ; the Lord will never hide his face from them : but the Sun of Righteousness shining upon them in his meridian brightness, will dispel all clouds, and give them an everlasting day, without the least mixture of darkness. A deluge of wrath, after a fearful thunder-clap from the throne, will sweep away the wicked from before the judgment-seat, into the lake of fire : but they are, in the first place, like Noah, brought into the ark, and out of harm's way.

(2.) White raiment hath been a token of purity. Therefore, " the Lamb's wife is arrayed in fine linen, clean and white," Rev.

xix. 8. And those who stood before the throne "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," chap. vii. 14. The saints shall then put on the robes of perfect purity, and shine in spotless holiness, like the sun in his strength, without the least cloud to intercept his light. Absolute innocence shall then be restored, and every appearance of sin banished far from this kingdom. The guilt of sin, and the reigning power of it are now taken away in the saints; nevertheless, sin dwelleth in them, Rom. vii. 20. But then it shall be no more in them: the corrupt nature will be quite removed; that root of bitterness will be plucked up, and no vestiges of it left in their souls: their nature shall be altogether pure and sinless. There shall be no darkness in their minds; but the understanding of every saint, when he is come to his kingdom, will be as a globe of pure and unmixed light. There shall not be the least aversion to good, nor the least inclination to evil, in their wills; but they will be brought to a perfect conformity to the will of God; blessed with angelic purity, and fixed therein. Their affections shall not be liable to the least disorder or irregularity; it will cost no trouble to keep them right: they will get such a fixed habit of purity, as they can never lose. They will be so refined from all earthly dross, as never to savour more of any thing but of heaven. Were it possible for them to be set again amidst the ensnaring objects of an evil world, they would walk among them without the least defilement; as the sun shines on the dunghill, yet is untainted; and as the angels preserved their purity in the midst of Sodom. Their graces shall then be perfected; and all the imperfection now cleaving to them done away. There will be no more ground for complaints of weakness of grace: none in that kingdom shall complain of an ill heart, or a corrupt nature. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but when he shall appear, we shall be like him," 1 John iii. 2.

(3.) Among the Jews, those who desired to be admitted into the priestly office, being tried, and found to be of the priest's line, and without blemish, were clothed in white, and enrolled among the priests. This seems to be alluded to, Rev. iii. 5, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life." So the saints shall not be kings only, but priests also; for they are a "royal priesthood," 1 Pet. ii. 9. They will be priests upon their thrones. They are judicially found descended from the Great High Priest of their profession, begotten of him by his Spirit, of the incorruptible seed of the word, and without blemish: so the trial being over, they are admitted to be priests in the temple above, that they may dwell in the

house of the Lord for ever. There is nothing upon earth more glorious than a kingdom; nothing more venerable than the priesthood; and both meet together in the glorified state of the saints. "The general assembly of the first-born," Heb. xii. 23, whose is the priesthood and the double portion, appearing in their white robes of glory, will be a reverend and glorious company. That day will shew them to be the persons whom the Lord has chosen out of all the tribes of the earth, to be near unto him, and to enter into his temple, even into his holy place. Their priesthood, begun on earth, shall be brought to its perfection, when they shall be employed in offering the sacrifice of praise to God and the Lamb for ever and ever. They got not their portion in the earth with the rest of the tribes; but the Lord himself was their portion, and will be their double portion, through the ages of eternity.

(4.) They were wont to wear white raiment in a time of triumph; to which also there seems to be an allusion, Rev. iii. 5, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment." And what is heaven but an everlasting triumph? None get thither but such as fight, and overcome too. Though Canaan was given to the Israelites as an inheritance, they were required to conquer it, ere they could be possessors of it. The saints, in this world, are in the field of battle; often in red garments, garments rolled in blood: but the day approaches, in which they shall "stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands," Rev. vii. 9, having obtained a complete victory over all their enemies. The palm was used as a sign of victory; because that tree, though oppressed with weights, yet yields not, but rather shooteth upwards. And palm trees were carved on the doors of the most holy place, 1 Kings vi. 32, which was a special type of heaven; for heaven is the place which the saints are received into as conquerors.

Behold the joy and peace of the saints in their white robes! The joys arising from the view of past dangers, and of riches and honours gained at the very door of death, doth most sensibly touch one's heart: and this will be an ingredient in the everlasting happiness of the saints, which could have had no place in the heaven of innocent Adam, and his sinless offspring, supposing him to have stood. Surely the glorified saints will not forget the entertainment which they met with in the world; it will be to the glory of God to remember it, and will also heighten their joy. The Sicilian king, by birth the son of a potter, acted a wise part, in that he would be served at his table with earthen vessels; which could not but put an additional sweetness in his meals, not to be relished by one born

heir to the crown. Can ever meat be so sweet to any as to the hungry man? Or can any have such a relish of plenty as he who has been under pinching straits? The more difficulties the saints have passed through in their way to heaven, the place will be the sweeter to them when they come to it. Every happy stroke, struck in the spiritual warfare, will be a jewel in their crown of glory. Each victory obtained against sin, Satan, and the world, will raise their triumphant joy the higher. The remembrance of the cross will sweeten the crown; and the remembrance of their travel through the wilderness, will put an additional verdure on the fields of glory; while they walk through them, looking back on the day when they went mourning without the sun.

And now that they appear triumphing in white robes, it is a sign they have obtained an honorable peace; such a peace as their enemies can disturb no more. So every thing peculiarly adapted to their militant condition is laid aside. The sword is laid down; and they betake themselves to the pen of a ready writer, to commemorate the praises of Him by whom they overcame. Public ordinances, preaching, sacraments, shall be honourably laid aside; there is no temple there, Rev. xxi. 22. On earth these were sweet to them: but the travellers being all got home, the inns, appointed for their entertainment by the way, are shut up; the candles are put out when the sun is risen; and the tabernacle used in the wilderness is folded up, when the temple of glory is come in its room. Many of the saints' duties will then be laid aside, as one gives his staff out of his hand, when he is come to the end of his journey. Praying shall then be turned to praising: and there being no sin to confess, no wants to seek the supply of, confession and petition shall be swallowed up in everlasting thanksgiving. There will be no mourning in heaven. They have sown in tears: the reaping time of joy is come, and, "God shall wipe all tears from their eyes," Rev. xxi. 4. No need of mortification there; and self-examination is then at an end. They will not need to watch any more; the danger is over. Patience has had its perfect work, and there is no use for it there. Faith is turned into sight, and hope is swallowed up in the ocean of sensible and full enjoyment. All the rebels are subdued, and the saints quietly sit on their throne; and so the forces, needful in the time of the spiritual warfare, are disbanded; and they carry on their triumph in the profoundest peace.

(5.) White garments were worn on festival days, in token of joy. And so shall the saints be clothed in white raiment; for they shall keep an everlasting Sabbath to the Lord, Heb. iv. 9, "There remaineth therefore a rest," or keeping of a Sabbath, "to the people

of God." The Sabbath, in the esteem of saints, is the queen of days: and they shall have an endless Sabbatism in the kingdom of heaven; so shall their garments be always white. They will have an eternal rest, with an uninterrupted joy: for heaven is not a resting place, where men may sleep out an eternity; there they rest not day nor night, but their work is their rest, and continual recreation; and toil and weariness have no place there. They rest there in God, who is the centre of their souls. Here they find the completion, or satisfaction, of all their desires; having the full enjoyment of God, and uninterrupted communion with him. This is the point, unto which, till the soul come, it will always be restless: but that point reached, it rests; for he is at the last end, and the soul can go no farther. It cannot understand, will, nor desire more; but in him it has what is commensurable to its boundless desires. This is the happy end of all the labours of the saints; their toil and sorrows issue in a joyful rest. The Chaldeans, measuring the natural day, put the day first, and the night last: but the Jews counted the night first, and the day last. Even so the wicked begin with a day of rest and pleasure, but end with a night of everlasting toil and sorrow: but God's people have their gloomy night first, and then comes their day of eternal rest. Which Abraham, in the parable, observed to the rich man in hell, Luke xvi. 25, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented."

3. If any inquire where the kingdom of the saints lies? it is not in this world; it lies in a better country, "that is, an heavenly," Heb. xi. 16, a country better than the best of this world; namely, the heavenly Canaan, Immanuel's land, where nothing is wanting to complete the happiness of the inhabitants. This is the happy country; blessed with a perpetual spring, and which yieldeth all things for necessity, convenience, and delight. There men shall eat angels' food; they shall be entertained with the hidden manna, Rev. ii. 17, without being set to the painful task of gathering it: they will be fed to the full, with the product of the land falling into their mouths, without the least toil to them. That land enjoys everlasting day, for there is "no night there," Rev. xxi. 25. Eternal sunshine beautifies this better country, but there is no scorching heat there. No clouds shall be seen there for ever: yet it is not a land of drought; the trees of the Lord's planting are set by the rivers of water, and shall never want moisture, for they will have an eternal supply of the Spirit, by Jesus Christ, from his Father. This is the only country, from whence our Lord came, and whither he is gone

again; the country which all the holy patriarchs and prophets had their eye upon while on earth; and which all the saints, who have gone before us, have fought their way to; and unto which the martyrs have joyfully swam through a sea of blood. This earth is the place of the saint's pilgrimage; that is their country, where they find their everlasting rest.

4. The royal city, is that great city, the holy Jerusalem, described at large, Rev. xxi. 10, to the end of the chapter. It is true, some learned divines place this city in the earth: but the particulars of this description seem to me to favour those most, who point us to the other world for it. The saints shall reign in that city, whose wall is of "jasper," ver. 18; and the foundations of the wall garnished with all manner of precious stones," ver. 19; and "the street of pure gold," ver. 21. So that their feet shall be set on that which the men of this world set their hearts upon. This is the city which God "has prepared for them," Heb. xi. 16; "a city that hath foundations," ver. 10; "a continuing city," chap. xiii. 14, which shall stand and flourish, when all the cities of the world are laid in ashes; and which shall not be moved, when the foundations of the world are overturned. It is a city that never changes its inhabitants: none of them shall ever be removed out of it; for life and immortality reign there, and no death can enter into it. It is blessed with a perfect and perpetual peace, and can never be in the least disturbed. Nothing from without can annoy it; the gates therefore are not shut at all by day, and there is no night there, Rev. xxi. 25. There can nothing from within trouble it. No want of provision there, no scarcity; no discord among the inhabitants. Whatever contentions are among the saints now, no vestige of their former jarrings shall remain there. Love to God, and to one another, shall be perfected; and those of them who stood at the greatest distance here, will joyfully embrace and delight in one another there.

5. The royal palace is Christ's Father's house, in which "are many mansions," John xiv. 2. There shall the saints dwell for ever. This is the house prepared for all the heirs of glory, even those of them who dwell in the meanest cottage now, or have not where to lay their heads. As the Lord calls his saints to a kingdom, he will provide them a house suitable to the dignity he puts upon them. Heaven will be a convenient, spacious, and glorious house, for those whom the King delights to honour. Never was a house purchased at so great a rate as this, being the purchase of the Mediator's blood; and for no less could it be afforded to them: never was there so much to do, to fit the inhabitants for a house. The saints were, by nature utterly unfit for this house, and human art and industry

could not make them meet for it. But the Father gives the designed inhabitants to the Son, to be by him redeemed: the Son pays the price of their redemption, even his own precious blood; justice gives them access to the house; and the Holy Spirit sanctifies them by his grace; that they may be meet to come in thither, where no unclean thing can enter. And no wonder, for it is the King's palace they enter into, Psalm xlv. 15; the house of the kingdom, where the great King keeps his court, where he has set his throne, and shews forth his glory, in a singular manner, beyond what mortals can conceive.

6. Paradise is their palace garden. "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise," said our Saviour to the penitent thief on the cross, Luke xxiii. 43. Heaven is a paradise for pleasure and delight, where there is both wood and water: "A pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb; and on either side of the river, the tree of life, which bears twelve manner of fruits, and yields her fruits every month, Rev. xxii. 1, 2. How happy might innocent Adam have been in the earthly paradise, where there was nothing wanting for use or delight!—Eden was the most pleasant spot of the uncorrupted earth and paradise the most pleasant spot of Eden: but what is earth in comparison of heaven? The glorified saints are advanced to the heavenly paradise. There they shall not only see, but "eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God," Rev. ii. 7. They shall behold the Mediator's glory, and be satisfied with his goodness. No flaming sword shall be there, to keep the way of that tree of life; but they shall freely eat of it, and live for ever. They shall "drink of the river of pleasures," Psalm xxxvi. 8, the sweetest and purest pleasures which Immanuel's land affords, and shall swim in an ocean of unmixed delight for evermore.

7. They shall have royal treasures, sufficient to support the dignity to which they are advanced. Since the street of the royal city is pure gold, and the twelve gates thereof are twelve pearls: their treasure must be of that which is better than gold or pearl. It is an "eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. iv. 17. O precious treasure! a treasure not liable to insensible corruption, by moths or rust; a treasure which none can steal from them, Matt. vi. 20. Never did any kingdom afford such a precious treasure, nor a treasure of such variety; for "he that overcometh, shall inherit all things," Rev. xxi. 7. No treasures on earth are stored with all things: if they were all put together in one, there would be far more valuable things wanting in that one, than found in it.—This then is the peculiar treasure of the kings who inherit the kingdom of heaven. They

shall want nothing that may contribute to their full satisfaction. Now they are rich in hope; but then they will have their riches in hand. Now all things are theirs in respect of right; then all shall be theirs in possession. They may go for ever through Immanuel's land, and behold the glory and riches thereof, with the satisfying thought, that all they see is their own. It is a pity those should ever be uneasy under the want of earthly good things, who may be sure they shall inherit all things at length.

8. Though there is no material temple therein, no serving of God in the use of ordinances, as here on earth; yet, as for this kingdom, "The Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it," Rev. xxi. 22. As the temple was the glory of Canaan, so will the celestial temple be the glory of heaven. The saints shall be brought in thither as a royal priesthood, to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever; for Jesus Christ will then make every saint "a pillar in the temple of God, and he shall go no more out," Rev. iii. 12, as the priests and Levites did, in their courses, go out of the material temple. There the saints shall have the cloud of glory, the divine presence, with most intimate, uninterrupted communion with God: there they shall have Jesus Christ, as the true ark, wherein the fiery law shall be for ever hid from their eyes: and the mercy-seat, from which nothing shall be breathed but everlasting peace and good will towards them: the cherubim, the society of holy angels, who shall join with them in eternal admiration of the mystery of Christ: the golden candlestick, with its seven lamps, for "the glory of God" doth "lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof," Rev. xxi. 23: the incense altar, in the intercession of Christ, who "ever liveth to make intercession for them," Heb. vii. 25, eternally exhibiting the manner of his death and suffering, and efficaciously willing for ever, that those whom the Father hath given him, be with him: and the shewbread table, in the perpetual feast they shall have together in the enjoyment of God. This leads me more particularly to consider,

9. The society in this kingdom. What would royal power and authority, ensigns of royalty, richest treasures, and all other advantages of a kingdom, avail, without comfortable society? Some crowned heads have had but a wretched life, through the want of it: their palaces have been unto them as prisons, and their badges of honour, as chains on a prisoner: while, hated of all, they had none they could trust in, or whom they could have comfortable fellowship with. But the chief part of heaven's happiness lies in the blessed society which the saints shall have there.

(1.) The society of the saints, among themselves, will be no small

part of heaven's happiness. The communion of saints on earth is highly prized by all those who are travelling through the world to Zion; and companions in sin can never have such true pleasure and delight in one another, as sometimes the Lord's people have in praying together, and in conversing about those things which the world is a stranger to. Here the saints are but few in a company at best: and some of them are so situated, as that they seem to themselves to dwell alone having no access to such as they would freely embosom themselves to, in spiritual matters, they sigh and say, "Wo is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer-fruits—there is no cluster to eat—the good man is perished out of the earth," Micah vii. 1, 2. But in the general assembly of the first born in heaven, none of all the saints, who ever were or will be on the earth, shall be missing. They will be all of them together in one place, all possess one kingdom, and all sit down together to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Here the best of the saints want not their sinful imperfections, making their society less comfortable: but there they shall be perfect, without "spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," Eph. v. 27. All natural, as well as sinful imperfections, will be done away; they "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament," Dan. xii. 3.

There we shall see Adam and Eve in the heavenly paradise freely eating of the tree of life; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the holy patriarchs, no more wandering from land to land, but come to their everlasting rest; all the prophets feasting their eyes on the glory of Him, of whose coming they prophesied; the twelve apostles of the Lamb, sitting on their twelve thrones; all the holy martyrs in their long white robes, with their crowns on their heads; the godly kings advanced to a kingdom which cannot be moved; and those that turn many to righteousness, shining as the stars for ever and ever. There we shall see our godly friends, relations, and acquaintances, pillars in the temple of God, to go no more out from us. And it is more than probable, that the saints will know one another in heaven; at least they will know their friends, relatives, and those they were acquainted with on earth, and such as have been most eminent in the Church; yet that knowledge will be purified from all earthly thoughts and affections. This seems to be included in that perfection of happiness to which the saints shall be advanced. If Adam knew who and what Eve was, at first sight, when the Lord God brought her to him, Gen. ii. 23, 54, why should one question but husbands and wives, parents and children, will know each other in glory? If the Thessalonians, converted by Paul's ministry, shall be his "crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at

his coming," 1 Thess. ii. 19, why may we not conclude, that ministers shall know their people, and people their ministers, in heaven? And if the disciples, on the mount of transfiguration, knew Moses and Elias, whom they had never seen before, Matth. xvii. 4, we have reason to think that we shall know them too, and such as them, when we come to heaven. The communion of saints shall be most intimate there; "they shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven," Matt. viii. 11. Lazarus was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom, Luke xvi. 23; which denotes most intimate and familiar society. And though diversity of tongues shall cease. 1 Cor. xiii. 8, I make no question, but there will be the use of speech in heaven; and that the saints will glorify God in their bodies there, as well as in their spirits, speaking forth his praises with an audible voice. As for the language, we shall understand what it is, when we come thither. When Paul was caught up to the third heaven, the seat of the blessed, he heard there unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter, 2 Cor. xii. 4. Moses and Elias, on the mount with Christ, "talked with him," Matth. xvii. 3, and "spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem," Luke ix. 31.

(2.) The saints will have the society of all the holy angels there. An innumerable company of angels shall be companions to them in their glorified state. Happy were the shepherds who heard the song of the heavenly host when Christ was born! but thrice happy they, who shall join their voices with them in the choir of saints and angels in heaven, when he shall be glorified in all who shall be about him there! Then shall we be brought acquainted with those blessed spirits, who never sinned. How bright will these morning stars shine in the holy place! they were ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation: loved them for their Lord and Master's sake; encamped round about them, to preserve them from danger: how joyfully will they welcome them to their everlasting habitations; and rejoice to see them come at length to their kingdom, as the tutor doth in the prosperity of his pupils! The saints shall be no more afraid of them, as at times they were wont to be: they shall then have put off mortality, and the infirmities of the flesh, and be themselves as the angels of God, fit to enjoy communion and fellowship with them. And both being brought under one head, the Lord Jesus Christ, they shall join in the praises of God and of the Lamb, "saying, with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," &c. Rev. v. 11, 12. Whether the angels shall, as some think, assume ethereal bodies, that they may be seen by the bodily eyes of the saints, and be in a nearer capacity to converse with them, I know

not: but, as they want not ways of converse among themselves, we have reason to think, that conversation between them and the saints shall not be for ever blocked up.

(3.) They shall have society with the Lord himself in heaven, glorious communion with God in Christ, which is the perfection of happiness. I choose to speak of communion with God and the man Christ, together; because, as we derive our grace from the Lamb so we shall derive our glory from him too, the man Christ being, if I may be allowed the expression, the centre of the divine glory in heaven, from whence it is diffused unto all the saints. This seems to be taught us by the Scriptures which express heaven's happiness by "being with Christ," Luke xxiii. 43, "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise." John xvii. 24, "Father, I will that these also, whom thou hast given me, be with me," and remarkably to this purpose is what follows, "that they may behold my glory." 1 Thess. iv. 17, "So shall we be ever with the Lord," that is, the Lord Christ, whom we shall meet in the air. This also seems to be the import of the Scriptures, wherein God and the Lamb, the slain Saviour, are jointly spoken of, in point of the happiness of the saints in heaven, Rev. vii. 17, "For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Chap. xxi. 3, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them," as in a tabernacle, so the word signifies, that is, in the flesh of Christ: compare John i. 14; and ver. 22, "The Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb are the temple of it." Here lies the chief happiness of the saints in heaven, without which they never could be happy, though lodged in that glorious place, and blessed with the society of angels there. What I will venture to say of it, shall be comprised in three things:

*First*, The saints in heaven shall have the glorious presence of God, and of the Lamb: God himself shall be with them, Rev. xxi. 3, and they shall ever be with the Lord. God is every where present in respect of his essence: the saints militant have his special gracious presence; but in heaven they have his glorious presence. There they are brought near to the throne of the great King, and stand before him, where he shews his inconceivable glory. There they have the tabernacle of God, on which the cloud of glory rests, the all-glorious human nature of Christ, wherein the fulness of the Godhead dwells; not veiled, as in the days of his humiliation, but shining through that blessed flesh, that all his saints may behold his glory, and making that body more glorious than a thousand suns: so that the city has no need of the sun, nor of the moon, but

“the glory of God doth lighten it, and the lamb is the light thereof,” properly “the candle thereof,” Rev. xxi. 23, that is, the Lamb is the luminary or luminous body, which gives light to the city; as the sun and moon now give light to the world, or as a candle lightens a dark room: and the light proceeding from that glorious luminary of the city, is the glory of God. Sometimes on earth that candle burns very dimly, it was hid under a bushel, in the time of his humiliation; only now and then it darted out some rays of this light, which dazzled the eyes of the spectators: but now it is set on high, in the city of God, where it shines, and shall shine for ever, in perfection of glory. It was sometimes laid aside, as a stone disallowed of the builders: but now it is and for ever will be, “the light,” or luminary of that city; and that, “like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal,” ver. 11.

Who can conceive the happiness of the saints in the presence chamber of the great King, where he sits in his chair of state, making his glory eminently to appear in the man Christ? His gracious presence makes a mighty change upon the saints in this world: his glorious presence in heaven, then, must needs raise their graces to perfection, and elevate their capacities. The saints experience that the presence of God, now with them in his grace, can make a little heaven of a sort of hell. How great then must the glory of heaven be, by his presence there in his glory! If a candle, in some sort, beautifies a cottage or prison, how will the shining sun beautify a palace or paradise! The gracious presence of God made a wilderness lightsome to Moses; the valley of the shadow of death, to David; a fiery furnace, to the three children: what a ravishing beauty then shall arise from the Sun of righteousness, shining in his meridian brightness on the street of the city paved with pure gold! This glorious presence of God in heaven, will put a glory on the saints themselves. The most pleasing garden is devoid of beauty, when the darkness of the night sits down on it; but the shining sun puts a glory on the blackest mountains: so those who are now as bottles in the smoke, when set in the glorious presence of God, will be glorious both in soul and body.

*Secondly*, The saints in heaven shall have the full enjoyment of God and of the Lamb. This is it that perfectly satisfies the rational creature; and here is the saints' everlasting rest. This will make up all their wants, and fill the desires of their souls, which, after all here obtained, still cry, “Give, give,” not without some anxiety; because, though they do enjoy God, yet they do not enjoy him fully. As to the way and manner of this enjoyment, our Lord tells us, John xvii. 3, “This is life eternal, that they might know thee,

the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Now there are two ways, in which a desirable object is known most perfectly and satisfyingly; the one is by sight, the other by experience: sight satisfies the understanding, and experience satisfies the will. Accordingly, one may say, that the saints enjoy God and the Lamb in heaven, 1. By an intuitive knowledge; 2. By an experimental knowledge; both of them perfect, I mean, in respect of the capacity of the creature; for otherwise a creature's perfect knowledge of an infinite Being is impossible. The saints below enjoy God, in that knowledge they have of him by report, from his holy word, which they believe; they see him likewise darkly in the glass of ordinances, which do, as it were, represent the Bridegroom's picture, or shadow, while he is absent: they have also some experimental knowledge of him; they taste that God is good, and that the Lord is gracious. But the saints above shall not need a good report of the King, they shall see him; therefore faith ceaseth: they will behold his own face; therefore ordinances are no more: there is no need of a glass. They shall drink, and drink abundantly, of that whereof they have tasted; and so hope ceaseth, for they are at the utmost bounds of their desires.

(1.) The saints in heaven shall enjoy God and the Lamb, by sight, and that in a most perfect manner, 1 Cor. xiii. 12, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face." Here our sight is but mediate, as by a glass, in which we see not things themselves, but the images of things! but there we shall have an immediate view of God and the Lamb. Here our knowledge is but obscure: there it shall be clear, without the least mixture of darkness. The Lord now converses with his saints through the lattices of ordinances; but then shall they be in the presence chamber with him. There is a veil now on the glorious face, as to us: but when we come to the upper house, that veil, through which some rays of beauty are now darted, will be found entirely taken off; and then shall glorious excellencies and perfections, not seen in him by mortals, be clearly discovered, for we shall see his face, Rev. xxii. 4. The phrase seems to be borrowed from the honour put on some in the courts of monarchs, to be attendants on the king's person. We read, Jer. liii. 25, of "seven men that were" (Heb. "seers of the king's face," that is as we read it,) "near the king's person." O unspeakable glory! the great king keeps his court in heaven: and the saints shall all be his courtiers ever near the king's person, seeing his face. "The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face," Rev. xxii. 3, 4.

They shall see Jesus Christ, God and man with their bodily eyes,

as he will never lay aside the human nature. They will behold that glorious blessed body, which is personally united to the divine nature, and exalted above principalities and powers, and every name that is named. There we shall see, with our eyes, that very body which was born of Mary at Bethlehem, and crucified at Jerusalem between two thieves: the blessed head, that was crowned with thorns; the face, that was spit upon; the hands and feet, that were nailed to the cross; all shining with inconceivable glory. The glory of the man Christ will attract the eyes of all the saints, and he will be for ever admitted in all them that believe, 2 Thess. i. 10. Were each star in the heavens shining as the sun in its meridian brightness, and the light of the sun so increased, as the stars, in that case, should bear the same proportion to the sun, in point of light, that they do now; it might possibly be some faint resemblance of the glory of the man Christ, in comparison with that of the saints; for though the saints "shine forth as the sun," yet not they, but the Lamb shall be "the light of the city." The wise men fell down, and worshipped him, when they saw him "a young child, with Mary his mother in the house." But O what a ravishing sight will it be to see him in his kingdom, on his throne, at the Father's right hand! "The Word was made flesh," John i. 14, and the glory of God shall shine through that flesh, and the joys of heaven spring out from it, unto the saints, who shall see and enjoy God in Christ. For since the union between Christ and the saints is never dissolved, but they continue his members for ever; and the members cannot draw their life, but from their head; seeing that which is independent on the head, as to vital influence, is no member; therefore Jesus Christ will remain the everlasting bond of union betwixt God and the saints; from whence their eternal life shall spring, John xvii. 2, 3, "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God," &c. Ver. 22, 23, "And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." Wherefore the immediate enjoyment of God in heaven, is to be understood in respect of the laying aside of word and sacraments, and such external means, as we enjoy God by in this world; but not as if the saints should then cast off their dependence on their Head for vital influences: nay, "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them unto living fountains of waters," Rev. vii. 17.

Now when we shall behold him, who died for us, that we might

live for evermore, whose matchless love made him swim through the Red Sea of God's wrath, to make a path in the midst of it for us, by which we might pass safely to Canaan's land; then we shall see what a glorious one he was, who suffered all this for us; what entertainment he had in the upper house; what hallelujahs of angels could not hinder him to hear the groans of a perishing multitude on earth, and to come down for their help; and what glory he laid aside for us. Then shall we be more "able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge," Eph. iii. 18, 19. When the saints shall remember, that the waters of wrath which he was plunged into, are the wells of salvation from whence they draw all their joy; that they have got the cup of salvation in exchange for the cup of wrath his Father gave him to drink, which his sinless human nature shivered at; how will their hearts leap within them, burn with seraphic love, like coals of juniper, and the arch of heaven ring with their songs of salvation! The Jews, celebrating the feast of tabernacles, which was the most joyful of all their feasts, and lasted seven days, went once every day about the altar, singing hosanna, with their myrtle, palm, and willow branches in their hands, the two former signs of victory, the last, of chastity, in the meantime bending their boughs towards the altar. When the saints are presented as a chaste virgin to Christ, and as conquerors have got their palms in their hands, how joyfully will they compass the altar evermore, and sing their hosannas, or rather their hallelujahs about it, bending their palms towards it, acknowledging themselves to owe all unto the Lamb that was slain, and who redeemed them with his blood! To this agrees what John saw, Rev. vii. 9, 10, "A great multitude—stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

They shall see God, Matt. v. 8. They will be happy in seeing the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, not with their bodily eyes, in respect of which God is invisible, 1 Tim. i. 17, but with the eyes of their understanding; being blessed with the most perfect, full, and clear knowledge of God, and divine things, which the creature is capable of. This is called the beatific vision, and is the perfection of understanding, the utmost term thereof. It is but an obscure delineation of the glory of God, that mortals can have on earth; a sight, as it were, of "his back parts," Exod. xxxiii. 23. But there they will see his face, Rev. xxii. 4. They shall see him in the fulness of his glory, and behold him fixedly; whereas it is but a passing view they

can have of him here, *Exod. xxxiv. 6.* There is a vast difference between the sight of a king in his undress, quickly passing by us ; and a fixed leisurely view of him, sitting on his throne in his royal robes, his crown on his head, and his sceptre in his hand : such a difference will there be, between the greatest manifestation of God that ever a saint had on earth, and the display of his glory in heaven. There the saints shall eternally, without interruption, feast their eyes upon him, and be ever viewing his glorious perfections. And as their bodily eyes shall be strengthened, and fitted to behold the glorious majesty of the man Christ ; as eagles gaze on the sun, without being blinded thereby ; so their minds shall have such an elevation, as will fit them to see God in his glory : their capacities shall be enlarged, according to the measure in which he shall be pleased to communicate himself unto them, for their complete happiness.

This blissful sight of God being quite above our present capacities, we must needs be much in the dark about it. But it seems to be something else than the sight of that glory, which we shall see with our bodily eyes, in the saints, and in the man Christ, or any other splendour or refulgence from the Godhead whatever ; for no created thing can be our chief good and happiness, nor fully satisfy our souls ; and it is plain that these things are somewhat different from God himself. Therefore I conceive, that the souls of the saints shall see God himself : so the Scriptures teach us, that we shall “ see face to face, and know even as we are known,” *1 Cor. xiii. 12* ; and that “ we shall see him as he is,” *1 John iii. 2.* Yet the saints can never have an adequate conception of God : they cannot comprehend that which is infinite. They may touch the mountain, but cannot grasp it in their arms. They cannot, with one glance of their eye, behold what grows on every side : but the divine perfections will be an unbounded field, in which the glorified shall walk eternally, seeing more and more of God ; since they can never come to the end of that which is infinite. They may bring their vessels to this ocean every moment, and fill them with new waters.—What a ravishing sight would it be, to see all the perfections, and lovely qualities, that are scattered here and there among the creatures, gathered together into one ! But even such a sight would be infinitely below this blissful sight the saints shall have in heaven. For they shall see God, in whom all these perfections shall eminently appear infinitely more, whereof there is no vestige to be found in the creatures. In him shall they see every thing desirable, and nothing but what is desirable.

Then shall they be perfectly satisfied as to the love of God to-

wards them, which they are now ready to question on every turn. They will no more find any difficulty to persuade themselves of it, by marks, signs, and testimonies: they will have an intuitive knowledge of it. They shall, with the profoundest reverence be it spoken, look into the heart of God, and there see the love he bore to them from all eternity, and the love and goodness he will bear to them for evermore. The glorified shall have a most clear and distinct understanding of divine truths, for in his light we shall see light, Psalm xxxvi. 9. The light of glory will be a complete commentary on the Bible, and untie all the hard and knotty questions in divinity. There is no joy on earth, comparable to that which arises from the discovery of truth, no discovery of truth comparable to the discovery of Scripture truth, made by the Spirit of the Lord unto the soul. "I rejoice at thy word," says the psalmist, "as one that findeth great spoil," Psalm cxix. 162. Yet, while here, it is but an imperfect discovery. How ravishing then will it be, to see the opening of all the treasure hid in that field! They shall also be led into the understanding of the works of God. The beauty of the works of creation and providence will then be set in due light. Natural knowledge will be brought to perfection by the light of glory. The web of providence, concerning the church, and all men whatever, will then be cut out, and laid before the eyes of the saints: and it will appear a most beautiful mixture; so as they shall all say together, on the view of it, "He hath done all things well." But, in a special manner, the work of redemption shall be the eternal wonder of the saints, and they will admire and praise the glorious contrivance for ever. Then shall they get a full view of its suitableness to the divine perfections, and to the case of sinners; and clearly read the covenant that passed between the Father and the Son, from all eternity, concerning their salvation. They shall for ever wonder and praise, and praise and wonder, at the mystery of wisdom and love, goodness and holiness, mercy and justice, appearing in the glorious scheme. Their souls shall be eternally satisfied with the sight of God himself, of their election by the Father, their redemption by the Son, and application thereof to them by the Holy Spirit.

(2.) The saints in heaven shall enjoy God in Christ by experimental knowledge, which is, when the object itself is given and possessed. This is the participation of the divine goodness in full measure; which is the perfection of the will, and utmost term thereof. "The Lamb shall lead them unto living fountains of waters," Rev. vii. 17. These are no other but God himself, "the fountain of living waters," who will fully and freely communicate himself unto them. He will pour out of his goodness eternally into their souls: then

shall they have a most lively sensation, in the innermost part of their souls, of all that goodness they heard of, and believe to be in him, and of what they shall see in him by the light of glory. This will be an everlasting practical exposition of that word, which men and angels cannot sufficiently unfold, to wit, God himself shall—"be their God," Rev. xxi. 3. God will communicate himself unto them fully: they will no more be set to taste of the streams of divine goodness in ordinances, as they were wont, but shall drink at the fountain head. They will be no more entertained with sips and drops, but filled with all the fulness of God. And this will be the entertainment of every saint: for, though in created things, what is given to one is withheld from another; yet this infinite good can fully communicate itself to all, and fill 'all. Those who are heirs of God, the great heritage, shall then enter into a full possession of their inheritance: and the Lord will open his treasures of goodness unto them, that their enjoyment may be full. They shall not be stinted to any measure: but the enjoyment shall go as far as their enlarged capacities can reach. As a narrow vessel cannot contain the ocean, so neither can the finite creature comprehend the infinite good: but no measure shall be set to the enjoyment, but what ariseth from the capacity of the creature. So that, although there be degrees of glory, yet all shall be filled, and have what they can hold; though some will be able to hold more than others. There will be no want to any of them; all shall be fully satisfied, and perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of divine goodness, according to their enlarged capacities: as when bottles of different sizes are filled, some contain more, others less; yet all of them have what they can contain. The glorified shall have all in God, for the satisfaction of all their desires. No created thing can afford satisfaction to all our desires; clothes may warm us, but they cannot feed us; the light is comfortable, but cannot nourish us: but in God we shall have all our desires, and we shall desire nothing without him. They shall be the happy ones, that desire nothing but what is truly desirable; they shall have all they desire. God will be all in all to the saints: he will be their life, health, riches, honour, peace, and all good things. He will communicate himself freely to them: the door of access to him shall never be shut again for one moment. They may, when they will, take of the fruits of the tree of life, for they will find it on each side of the river, Rev. xxii. 2. There will be no veil between God and them, to be drawn aside; but his fulness shall never stand open to them. No door to knock at in heaven; no asking to go before receiving; the Lord will allow his people an unrestrained familiarity with himself there.

Now they are in part made "partakers of the divine nature!" but then they shall perfectly partake of it; that is to say, God will communicate to them his own image, make all his goodness not only pass before them, but pass into them, and stamp the image of all his own perfections upon them, so far as the creature is capable of receiving the same; from whence shall result a perfect likeness to him in all things in or about them; which completes the happiness of the creature. This is what the psalmist seems to have had in view, Psalm. xvii. 15, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness;" the perfection of God's image following upon the beatific vision. And so says John, 1 John iii. 2, "We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Hence there shall be a most close and intimate union between God and the saints: God shall be in them, and they in God, in a glorious and most perfect union: for then shall their dwelling in love be made perfect. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him," 1 John iv. 16. How will the saints be united to God and he to them, when he shall see nothing in them but his own image; when their love shall arrive at its perfection, no nature but the divine nature being left in them; and all imperfection being swallowed up in their glorious transformation into the likeness of God! Their love to the Lord, being purified from the dross of self-love, shall be most pure; so as they shall love nothing but God, and in God. It shall no more be faint and languishing, but burn like coals of juniper. It will be a light without darkness, a flaming fire without smoke. As the live coal, when all the moisture is gone out of it, is all fire, so will the saints be all love, when they come to the full enjoyment of God in heaven, by intuitive and experimental knowledge of him, by sight and full participation of the divine goodness.

*Thirdly*, From this glorious presence and enjoyment shall arise an unspeakable joy, which the saints shall be filled with. "In thy presence is fulness of joy," Psalm xvi. 11. The saints sometimes enjoy God in the world; but when their eyes are held, so as not to perceive it, they have not the comfort of the enjoyment: but then, all mistakes being removed, they shall not only enjoy God, but rest in the enjoyment with inexpressible delight and satisfaction. The desire of earthly things causes torment, and the enjoyment of them often ends in loathing. But though the glorified saints shall ever desire more and more of God, their desires shall not be mixed with the least anxiety, since the fulness of the Godhead stands always open to them; therefore they shall hunger no more, they shall not have the least uneasiness in their eternal appetite after the hidden

manna; neither shall continued enjoyment cause loathing; they shall never think they have too much; therefore it is added, "neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat," Rev. vii. 16. The enjoyment of God and the Lamb will be ever fresh and new to them, through the ages of eternity: for they shall drink of living fountains of waters, where new waters are continually springing up in abundance, ver. 17. They shall eat of the tree of life, which, for variety, affords twelve manner of fruits, and these always new and fresh, for it yields every month, Rev. xxii. 2. Their joy shall be pure and unmixed, without any dregs of sorrow; not slight and momentary, but solid and everlasting, without interruption. They will enter into joy, Matt. xxv. 21, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." The expression is somewhat unusual, and brings to my recollection this word of our suffering Redeemer, Mark xiv. 34, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death." His soul was beset with sorrows, as the word there used will bear; the floods of sorrow went round about him, encompassing him on every hand: wherever he turned his eyes, sorrow was before him; it flowed in upon him from heaven, earth, and hell, all at once: thus was he entered into sorrow, and therefore saith, Psalm lxix. 2, "I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me." Now, wherefore all this, but that his own might enter into joy? Joy sometimes enters into us now, but has much to do to get access, while we are encompassed with sorrows: but then joy shall not only enter into us, but we shall enter into it, and swim for ever in an ocean of joy, where we shall see nothing but joy wherever we turn our eyes. The presence and enjoyment of God and the Lamb will satisfy us with pleasures for evermore: and the glory of our souls and bodies, arising from thence, will afford us everlasting delight. The spirit of heaviness, how closely soever it cleaves to any of the saints now, shall drop off then: their weeping shall be turned into songs of joy, and bottles of tears shall issue in rivers of pleasure. Happy they who now sow in tears, which shall spring up in joy in heaven, and will encircle their heads with a weight of glory.

Thus far of the society in this kingdom of the saints.

10. In the last place, the kingdom shall endure for ever. As every thing in it is eternal, so the saints shall have undoubted certainty, and full assurance, of the eternal duration of the same. This is a necessary ingredient in perfect happiness; for the least uncertainty as to the continuance of any good with one, is not without some fear, anxiety, and torment; and therefore is utterly inconsistent with perfect happiness. But the glorified shall never have fear, nor

cause of fear, of any loss: they shall be "ever with the Lord," 1 Thess. iv. 17. They shall all attain the full persuasion, that nothing shall be able to separate them from the love of God, nor from the full enjoyment of him for ever. The inheritance "reserved in heaven is incorruptible;" it hath no principle of corruption in itself, to make it liable to decay, but endures for evermore: it is undefiled; nothing from without can mar its beauty, nor is there any thing in itself to offend those who enjoy it. Therefore it fadeth not away; but ever remains in its native lustre, and primitive beauty, 1 Pet. i. 4. Hitherto of the nature of the kingdom of heaven.

II. We now proceed to speak of the admission of the saints into this their new kingdom. I shall briefly touch upon two things: 1. The formal admission, in the call upon them from the Judge to come into their kingdom. 2. The equality in which they are admitted and introduced to it.

1. Their admission, the text shews to be, by a voice from the throne: the King calling to them, from the throne, before angels and men, to come to their kingdom. Come and Go are but short words: but they will be such as will afford matter of thought to all mankind, through the ages of eternity; since everlasting happiness turns upon one, and everlasting misery on the other.

Now, our Lord bids the worst of sinners, who hear the gospel, Come; but the most part will not come unto him. Some few, whose hearts are touched by his Spirit, embrace the call, and their souls within them say, "Behold, we come unto thee:" they give themselves to the Lord, forsake the world and their lusts for him: they bear his yoke, and cast it not off, no, not in the heat of the day when the weight of it, perhaps, makes them sweat the blood out of their bodies. Behold the fools! says the carnal world, whither are they going? But stay a little, O foolish world! From the same mouth, whence they had the call they are now following, another call shall come, that will make amends for all: "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom."

The saints shall find an inexpressible sweetness in this call, Come. 1. Hereby Jesus Christ shews his desire of their society in the upper house, that they may be ever with him there. Thus he will open his heart unto them, as sometimes he did to his Father concerning them, saying, "Father, I will they be with me, where I am," John xvii. 24. Now, the travail of his soul stands before the throne not only the souls, but the bodies, he has redeemed; and they must come, for he must be completely satisfied. 2. Hereby they are solemnly invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. They were invited to the lower table by the voice of the servants, and the sacred

workings of the Spirit within them; and they came, and did partake of the feast of divine communications in the lower house: but Jesus Christ in person shall invite them, before all the world, to the highest table. 3. By this he admits them into the mansions of glory. The keys of heaven hang at the girdle of our royal Mediator. "All power in heaven" is given to him, Matt. xxvii. 18: and none get in thither but whom he admits. When they were living on earth with the rest of the world, he opened the doors of their hearts, entered into them, and shut them again; so as sin could never re-enter, to reign there as formerly: now he opens heaven's doors to them, draws his doves into the ark, and shuts them in; so as the law, death, and hell, can never get them out again. The saints in this life were still labouring to enter into that rest; but Satan was always pulling them back, their corruptions always drawing them down; insomuch that they have sometimes been left to hang by a hair of promise, if I may be allowed the expression, not without fear of falling into the lake of fire: but now Christ gives the word for their admission, they are brought in, and put beyond all hazard. 4. He speaks to them as the person introducing them into the kingdom, into the presence-chamber of the great King, and unto the throne. Jesus Christ is the great Secretary of heaven, whose office it is to bring the saints into the gracious presence of God now, and to whom alone it belongs to bring them into the glorious presence of God in heaven. Truly heaven would be a strange place to them, if Jesus were not there; but the Son will introduce his brethren into his Father's kingdom; they shall go in "with him to the marriage. Matt. xxv. 10.

2. Let us consider in what *quality* they are introduced by him.

(1.) He brings them in as the blessed of his Father; so runs the call from the throne, "Come, ye blessed of my Father," &c. It is Christ's Father's house they are to come into: therefore he puts them in mind that they are blessed of the Father; dear to the Father, as well as to himself. This it is that makes heaven home to them, namely, that it is Christ's Father's house, where they may be assured of welcome, being married to the Son, and being his Father's choice for that very end. He brings them in for his Father's sake, as well as for his own: they are the blessed of his Father; who, as he is the fountain of the Deity, is also the fountain of all blessings conferred on the children of men. They are those whom God loved from eternity. They were blessed in the eternal purpose of God, being elected to everlasting life. At the opening of the book of life, their names were found written therein: so that by bringing them to the kingdom, he doth but bring them to what the Father, from all

eternity, designed for them: being saved by the Son, they are saved according to his, that is, the Father's purpose, 2 Tim. i. 2. They are those to whom the Father has spoken well. He spoke well to them in his word, which must now receive its full accomplishment. They had his promise of the kingdom, lived and died in the faith of it; and now they come to receive the thing promised. Unto them he has done well. A gift is often in Scripture called a blessing; and God's blessing is ever real, like Isaac's blessing, by which Jacob became his heir: they were all by grace justified, sanctified, and enabled to persevere to the end; now they are raised up in glory, and being tried, stand in the judgment: what remains, then, but that God should crown his own work of grace in them, in giving them their kingdom, in the full enjoyment of himself for ever? Finally they are those whom God has consecrated; the which also is a Scripture term of blessing, 1 Cor. x. 16. God set them apart for himself, to be kings and priests unto him; and the Mediator introduces them, as such, to their kingdom and priesthood.

(2.) Christ introduces them, as heirs of the kingdom, to the actual possession of it. "Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom." They are the children of God by regeneration and adoption; "And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," Rom. viii. 17. Now is the general assembly of the first-born before the throne: their minority is overpast; and the time appointed of the Father for their receiving their inheritance, is come. The Mediator purchased the inheritance for them with his own blood; their rights and evidences were drawn long ago, and registered in the Bible; nay, they have investment of their inheritance in the person of Christ, as their proxy, when he ascended into heaven, "Whither the forerunner is for us entered," Heb. vi. 20. Nothing remains, but that they enter into personal possession thereof, which begun at death, is perfected at the last day; when the saints in their bodies, as well as their souls, go into their kingdom.

(3.) They are introduced to it as those it was prepared for, from the foundation of the world. The kingdom was prepared for them in the eternal purpose of God, before they, or any of them, had a being; which shews it to be a gift of free grace to them. It was from eternity the divine purpose that there should be such a kingdom for the elect; and that all impediments which might oppose their access to it, should be removed out of the way: and also, by the same eternal decree, every one's place in it was determined and set apart, to be reserved for him, that each of the children coming home at length into their Father's house, might find his own place awaiting him, and ready for him; as at Saul's table, David's place

was empty, when he was not there to occupy it himself, 1 Sam. xx. 25. And now the appointed time is come, they are brought in, to take their several places in glory.

USE. I shall conclude my discourse on this subject with a word of application. 1. To all who claim a right to this kingdom. 2. To those who have indeed a right to it. 3. To those who have no right thereto.

1. Since it is evident there is no promiscuous admission into the kingdom of heaven, and none do obtain it but those whose claim to it is solemnly tried by the great Judge, and, after trial, supported as good and valid; it is necessary that all of us partially try and examine, whether, according to the laws of the kingdom, contained in the Holy Scriptures, we can verify and make good our claim to this kingdom. The hopes of heaven, which most men have, are built on such sandy foundations, as can never abide the trial; having no ground whatever but in their own deluded fancy: such hopes will leave those who entertain them miserably disappointed at last. Wherefore, it is not only our duty, but our interest, to put the matter to a fair trial in time. If we find we have no right to heaven, we are yet in the way; and what we have not, we may obtain: but if we find we have a right to it, we shall then have the comfort of a happy prospect into eternity; which is the greatest comfort one is capable of in the world. If you inquire, how you may know whether you have a right to heaven or not, I answer, You may know that by the state you are now in. If you are yet in your natural state, you are children of wrath, and not children of this kingdom; for that state, to those who live and die in it, issues in eternal misery. If you be brought into the state of grace, you have a just claim to the state of glory; for grace will certainly issue in glory at length. This kingdom is an inheritance, which none but the children of God can justly claim. Now, we become the children of God by regeneration, and union with Christ his Son; "And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," Rom. viii. 17. These, then, are the great points upon which our evidences for the state of glory depend. Therefore, I refer you to what is said on the state of grace, for satisfying you as to your right to glory.

If you be heirs of glory, "the kingdom of God is within you," by virtue of your regeneration and union with Christ. 1. The kingdom of heaven has the throne in thy heart, if thou hast a right to that kingdom: Christ is in thee, and God is in thee; and having chosen him for thy portion, thy soul has taken up its everlasting rest in him, and gets no true rest but in him; as the dove, until she came

into the ark. To him the soul habitually inclines, by virtue of the new nature, the divine nature, which the heirs of glory are partakers of, Psalm lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." 2. The laws of heaven are in thy heart, if thou art an heir of heaven, Heb. viii. 10, "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." Thy mind is enlightened in the knowledge of the laws of the kingdom, by the Spirit of the Lord, the instructor of all the heirs of glory; for whoever may want instruction, surely an heir to a crown shall not want it. "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God," John vi. 45. Therefore, though father and mother leave them early, or be in no concern about their Christian education, and they be soon put to work for their daily bread, yet they shall not lack teaching. Withal, thy heart is changed, and thou bearest God's image, which consists in "righteousness and true holiness," Eph. iv. 24. Thy soul is reconciled to the whole law of God, and at war with all known sin. In vain do they pretend to the holy kingdom, who are not holy in heart and life; for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14. If heaven is a rest, it is for spiritual labourers, not for loiterers. If it is an eternal triumph, they are not in the way to it who avoid the spiritual warfare, and are in no care to subdue corruption, resist temptation, and to cut their way to it through the opposition made by the devil, the world, and the flesh. 3. The treasure in heaven is the chief in thy esteem and desire; for it is your treasure, and "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," Matt. vi. 21. If it is not the things that are seen, but the things that are not seen, which thy heart is in the greatest care and concern to obtain; if thou art driving a trade with heaven, and thy chief business lies there; it is a sign that thy treasure is there, for thy heart is there. But if thou art of those who wonder why so much ado is made about heaven and eternal life, as if less might serve the turn, thou art like to have nothing to do with it at all. Carnal men value themselves most on their treasures upon earth; with them, the things that are not seen are weighed down by the things that are seen, and no losses so much affect them as earthly losses: but the heirs of the crown of glory value themselves most on their treasures in heaven, and will not put their private estate in the balance with their kingdom; nor will the loss of the former go so near their hearts, as the thoughts of the loss of the latter. Where these first-fruits of heaven are to be found, the eternal weight of glory will surely follow after; while the want of them must be admitted according to the word, to be an incontestible evidence of an heir of wrath.

2. Let the heirs of the kingdom behave themselves suitably to their character and dignity. Live as having the faith and hope of this glorious kingdom : let your conversation be in heaven, Phil. iii. 20. Let your souls delight in communion with God while you are on earth, since you look for your happiness in communion with him in heaven. Let your speech and actions savour of heaven ; and in your manner of life, look like the country to which you are going : that it may be said of you, as of Gideon's brethren, Judges viii. 18, " Each one resembled the children of a king." Maintain a holy contempt of the world, and of the things of the world. Although others, whose earthly things are their best things, set their hearts upon them, yet it becomes you to set your feet on them, since your best things are above. This world is but the country through which lies your road to Immanuel's land. Therefore pass through it as pilgrims and strangers ; and dip not in the encumbrances of it, so as to retard you in your journey. It is unworthy of one born to a palace, to set his heart on a cottage, to dwell there ; and of one running for a prize of gold, to go off his way to gather the stones of the brook : but much more is it unworthy of an heir of the kingdom of heaven, to be hid among the stuff of this world, when he should be going on to receive his crown. The prize set before you challenges your utmost zeal, activity, and diligence ; and holy courage, resolution, and magnanimity, become those who are to inherit the crown. You cannot come at it without fighting your way to it, through difficulties from without and from within : but the kingdom before you is sufficient to balance them all, though you should be called to resist even unto blood. Prefer Christ's cross before the world's crown, and want in the way of duty, before ease and wealth in the way of sin : " Choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," Heb. xi. 25. In a common inn, strangers perhaps fare better than the children ; but here lies the difference, the children are to pay nothing for what they have got ; but the strangers get their bill, and must pay completely for all they have had. Did we consider the after-reckoning of the wicked for all the smiles of common providence they meet with in the world, we should not grudge them their good things here, nor take it amiss that God keeps our best things last. Heaven will make up all the saints' losses, and there all tears will be wiped away from their eyes.

It is worth observing, that there is such a variety of Scripture notions of heaven's happiness, as may suit every afflicted case of the saints. Are they oppressed ? The day cometh in which they shall have the dominion. Is their honour laid in the dust ? A throne to

sit upon, a crown on their head, and a sceptre in their hand, will raise it up again. Are they reduced to poverty? Heaven is a treasure. If they be forced to quit their own habitations, yet Christ's Father's house is ready for them. Are they driven to the wilderness? There is a city prepared for them. Are they banished from their native country? They shall inherit a better country. If they are deprived of public ordinances, the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple there, whither they are going; a temple, the doors of which none can shut. If their life be full of bitterness, heaven is a paradise for pleasure. If they groan under the remains of spiritual bondage, there is a glorious liberty abiding them. Do their defiled garments make them ashamed? The day cometh, in which their robes shall be white, pure, and spotless. The battle against flesh and blood, principalities and powers, is indeed sore: but a glorious triumph awaits them. If the toil and labours of the Christian life be great, there is an everlasting rest for them in heaven. Are they judged unworthy of the society of angels in heaven? Do they complain of frequent interruptions of their communion with God? There they shall go no more out, but shall see his face for evermore. If they are in darkness here, eternal light is there. If they grapple with death, there they shall have everlasting life. And, to sum up all in one word, "He that overcometh, shall inherit all things," Rev. xxi. 7. He shall have peace and plenty, profit and pleasure, every thing desirable; full satisfaction to his most enlarged desires. Let the expectants of heaven, then, lift up their heads with joy; let them gird up their loins, and so run that they may obtain; trampling on every thing that may hinder them in their way to the kingdom. Let them never account any duty too hard, nor any cross too heavy, nor any pains too great, so that they may attain the crown of glory.

3. Let those who have no right to the kingdom of heaven, be stirred up to seek it with all diligence. Now is the time, wherein the children of wrath may become heirs of glory: when the way to everlasting happiness is opened, it is no time to sit still and loiter. Raise up your hearts towards the glory that is to be revealed; and be not always in search of rest in this perishing earth. What can all your worldly enjoyments avail you, while you have no solid ground to expect heaven after this life is gone? The riches and honours, profits and pleasures, that must be buried with us, and cannot accompany us into another world, are but a wretched portion, and will leave men comfortless at length. Ah! why are men so eager in their lifetime to receive their good things? Why are they not rather careful to secure an interest in the kingdom of

heaven, which would never be taken from them, but afford them a portion to make them happy through the ages of eternity? If you desire honour, there you may have the highest honour, which will last when the world's honours are laid in the dust; if riches, heaven will yield you a treasure; and there are pleasures for evermore. O! be not despisers of the pleasant land, neither judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life; close with Christ, as he is offered to you in the gospel, and you shall inherit all things. Walk in the way of holiness, and it will lead you to the kingdom. Fight against sin and Satan, and you shall receive the crown. Forsake the world, and the doors of heaven will be opened to receive you.

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## PART VI.

### OF HELL.

*Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.—*  
 MATT. XXV. 41.

WERE there no other place of eternal lodging but heaven, I should here have closed my discourse of man's eternal state; but as in the other world there is a prison for the wicked, as well as a palace for the saints, we must also inquire into that state of everlasting misery; which the worst of men may well bear with, without crying, "Art thou come to torment us before the time?" since there is yet access to flee from the wrath to come; and all that can be said of it comes short of what the damned will feel; for "who knoweth the power of God's anger?"

The last thing which our Lord did, before he left the earth, was, "He lifted up his hands, and blessed his disciples," Luke xxiv. 50, 51. But the last thing he will do, before he leaves the throne, is to curse and condemn his enemies; as we learn from the text, which contains the dreadful sentence, wherein the everlasting misery of the wicked is declared. In which three things may be taken notice of: 1. The quality of the condemned: "ye cursed." The Judge finds the curse of the law upon them as transgressors, and sends them away with it, from his presence, into hell, there to be fully executed upon them. 2. The punishment which they are adjudged