

Building Together

***Key Verse: “We are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building.”
—I Corinthians 3:9***

***Selected Scripture:
I Corinthians 3:1-15***

IN THE KEY VERSE OF THIS lesson, the Apostle Paul testifies to the blessed relationship that the Lord’s people share as ‘labourers together with God.’ This special privilege was extended to the followers of our Lord Jesus during his First Advent, and it has continued throughout the entire Gospel Age. However, it has taken on even more meaning, and includes a broader dimension, to those brethren who have been witnesses to his Second Presence, and the great harvest work that is taking place in our own time. Jesus is now present as Lord of the harvest, and is presently directing the preparation work in connection with his kingdom that will soon be established.

During his earthly ministry nearly two thousand years ago, Jesus commissioned his disciples to go forth preaching this glorious Truth. “Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.”—Matt. 9:37,38

As a further dimension and meaning of our being fellow laborers with God, Paul tells us that we are ‘God’s husbandry.’ The word husband, as it is used in this text, suggests the work that is required to care for those who have heard the Divine call, and have responded favorably.

Jesus uses the illustration of the vine, and the degree of care that must be exercised to produce the desired fruitage. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it [to prune, or make clean], that it may bring forth more fruit."—John 15:1,2

James encourages us, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming [Greek *parousia*, presence] of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain." (James 5:7) The work of calling a people for God's name will have required the entire Gospel Age, and thus encompasses the great events of the 'early' rain of Jesus' first work, as well as to his return at the end of the age as the 'latter rain,' the ultimate conclusion of that work.

Paul acknowledges that he may have been blessed with the planting of the seed of Truth, and that Apollos may have assisted in the necessary watering of it; yet nevertheless it is God that gives the "increase." (I Cor. 3:6) Further, he says, "Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." (vs. 7) God's providential and meticulous care over his spiritual children will see the work to its final and glorious completion.

The apostle stresses next the importance that every one who has received the Truth must use utmost care in laying a good foundation for our faith, and that foundation is our trust in our Lord Jesus Christ. (vss. 10-13) Let us consider well the great blessing of working together with God toward the grand prospect of sharing in the ultimate blessing of all the families of the earth, in fulfillment of God's promise given to Abraham and his seed many centuries ago. (Gen. 22:15-18) "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"—I Cor. 3:16 ■