



THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH

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NOTE TO THE TEACHER

Display each illustration where indicated in text, laying volume aside when the story line continues beyond the picture.

Lesson 1

THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH

NOTE TO THE TEACHER

On Paul's second missionary journey, he visited the capital city of Macedonia Province: Thessalonica. It was an important commercial city with a reputation for evil. For three Sabbaths, Paul preached the Gospel in the synagogue. As a result, some Jews, many Gentiles and several important women believed the Gospel.

The unbelieving Jews, filled with envy, became violent. They swooped down upon the home of Jason (where Paul was staying), intending to take Paul and Silas (his companion) by force to the governmental authorities. Failing to find the missionaries, the rebels dragged Jason and some others to the city rulers. They charged the men with treason because they spoke of another king, Jesus. (See Acts 17:7.) The political powers took money from Jason and the others with the understanding they were to get Paul out of the city and never let him return. Paul doubtless considered this the work of Satan. (See 1 Thessalonians 2:18.)

That night Jason and the others sent Paul and Silas to Berea (40 miles away). But when the Thessalonian Jews learned of this, they rushed to Berea and stirred up the people. So the new Berean Christians escorted Paul to Athens (about 200 miles), the capital of Achaia (Greece) Province. (See Acts 17:14-15.) After preaching in Athens, Paul went to the city of Corinth (about 50 miles), where he spent 18 months. (See Acts 18:11.) During that time he wrote his letters to the church at Thessalonica.

Although Paul may have been with the Thessalonians less than a month, he taught the new converts many of the great doctrines of the faith. (For example, in the first letter he refers to the rapture of the church: 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:14-17; 5:23; the day of the Lord, 5:1-3; election, 1:4; resurrection, 4:14-18; sanctification, 4:3; 5:23.)

Because the Thessalonians were suffering violent persecution, Paul was concerned for them. They were new babes in Christ, only recently saved from heathenism. So, even before he wrote to them, he sent Timothy to: (1) establish them; (2) comfort them; and (3) see if their faith was standing their tests and temptations. (See 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5.)

Timothy returned with a good report of the Thessalonians' faith [toward God] and love [toward men]. This news brought strengthening comfort and life itself to Paul (1 Thessalonians 3:7-8). Nevertheless, Paul yearned to visit them again in order to help them become mature Christians (1 Thessalonians 3:10). For him, leading souls to the Saviour was only the beginning. After that, there was the work of building them up in Christ so their faith would not be defective.

May this be *your* concern for those committed to your care, teacher.

It will be necessary for you to make it perfectly clear that although the lessons are in story form, the teaching material itself is truth. Your students should carefully examine the Bible text.

Scripture to be studied: Acts 17:1-9; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; 1 Thessalonians 3:1-7

The aim of the lesson: To show that witnessing Christians may be persecuted.

What your students should know: Even the earliest Christians were persecuted for their faith.

What your students should feel: A longing to be effective witnesses for the Lord.

What your students should do: Study 1 Thessalonians every day this week, reviewing today's lesson.

Lesson outline (for the teacher's and students' notebooks):

1. The beginning of the Thessalonian church (Acts 17:1-9; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10).
2. The Thessalonians' persecutions (2 Thessalonians 1:4-6).
3. Timothy's visit to Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 3:1-7).
4. Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians.

The verses to be memorized:

Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from Heaven.

(1 Thessalonians 1:9b-10a)