

# The New Inductive Study Series Standing Firm in These Last Days

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by Kay Arthur

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## ***FIRST THESSALONIANS***

### **INTRODUCTION TO 1 THESSALONIANS**

Jesus is coming ... and I'm filled with questions: *How should I live in the light of His coming? How am I going to handle the pressures of society? The cravings of my flesh?*

*Should I stop working and do nothing but "serve Him" until He comes? Or should I grab all I can from life in case Jesus comes before I have tasted all that life has to offer?*

*What about the suffering and affliction I've encountered since I came to believe in Jesus Christ? Are those who scorned, mocked, and even afflicted me going to get away with their cruel and unfeeling behavior? Is there justice—a day of reckoning, or will His coming preclude all that?*

*What will His coming be like? What will happen to those who hoped to see His coming but died before He came? What will happen to those who believe and are here when He comes? If the day of the Lord is coming and it's a day of darkness and destruction, where will I be when it comes?*

Beloved, if these are questions that cross your mind from time to time or maybe even linger there, then you have chosen just the right book to study. As you study these next nine weeks, you will find not only answers to these questions, but you will find valuable words of exhortation and comfort to equip you to stand firm and be found "without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

If you will give this study approximately 15 to 30 minutes each day, you will be awed at what you learn and at the transformation that results as you simply put the truths you glean into action. Studying the Word of God in this manner is transforming because you are brought face-to-face with the Word of God in a way that allows you to see truth for yourself. Remember that truth sets you apart unto your God and Father.

## **Week One**

### **Without Blame at Christ's Return—Is It Possible**

#### ***DAY ONE***

Whenever you begin a study of any book of the Bible, if possible it is always good to read through the entire book several times to develop a sense of the context, an awareness of the total content of the book, and how the author lays out the material. However, due to the abbreviated nature of this series, you will be asked to read 1 Thessalonians as a whole only twice in this first week of our study.

Then next week, our five-week chapter-by-chapter analysis of 1 Thessalonians begins. Hopefully, after this six-week study, you will move on into the three-week study of 2 Thessalonians. As mentioned earlier, it is in the study of these two books that you will find the answers to the questions posed in the introduction to this study.

As you begin today, remember that marking key words in your Bible is an invaluable learning tool. (If you haven't read "How to Get Started" in the beginning of this book, please stop and do so now. It is critical to your study.) If you are hesitant to mark in your Bible because you think you may make mistakes, either print out a copy of the text from your computer or photocopy the text from your Bible so that you can work on a copy and transfer your marks and notations into your Bible later. In this age of erasers and correction fluid, don't be too reluctant to mark your Bible.

Now then, let's begin. Remember that our goal for this week is simply to get an overview of 1 Thessalonians. Don't become overwhelmed or bogged down by trying to understand the entire book in one reading.

1. Before you begin to read, make a bookmark listing the key words and phrases which follow. Mark them on the book-mark the same way you plan to mark them in the text:
  - all references to the Lord's coming,
  
  - *affliction* and its synonyms— *afflictions*, *tribulation*, *suffer(ed)*, and *suffering(s)*.

(Note that a specific phrase for the Lord's coming was not given since these references vary in their wording. You should decide how you will mark such references and mark the phrase "the Lord's coming" in this way on your bookmark and then watch carefully for and mark each reference in this way as you study.)

2. Read chapter 1 and then record the following in your notebook:
3. Who is writing?
  
4. To whom is it written?

5. Now on a different sheet of paper from the one where you just made your notes, make a list like the one on page 19, leaving space after each entry so that you have room to make notes related to each chapter as you study:

## **MAIN TOPICS IN 1 THESSALONIANS**

Chapter 1:

Chapter 2:

Chapter 3:

Chapter 4:

Chapter 5:

Now under your heading “Chapter 1,” record the main subject or topic the author covers in this chapter. (By the way, there were no chapter divisions in the original text of the Bible. Chapter and verse divisions were added later for the sake of reference and study.)

### ***DAY TWO***

Read 1 Thessalonians 2 and continue to mark key words. Mark any reference to *the coming of Jesus Christ* and references to affliction by marking *suffered*, *sufferings*, or *mistreated*. Be sure to mark key words with the color or symbol you chose when you made your bookmark yesterday.

Record the main subject the author covers in this chapter in your notebook under your Chapter 2 heading.

### ***DAY THREE***

Your assignment for today is to read chapter 3 and mark all references to *the coming of Jesus Christ* and any occurrence of the word *afflictions* along with its synonyms. Don't forget to make your notes on the chapter in your notebook.

### ***DAY FOUR***

As you have probably already surmised, chapter 4 is your assignment for today. Follow the same procedure as for the previous chapters.

### ***DAY FIVE***

Finally, we come to the last chapter of 1 Thessalonians. Follow the same procedure you have in the last four days.

If you have time when you finish your assignment, look at your notebook to see what you recorded as the main subjects in each chapter. See if you notice where there seems to be a change or “break” in what the author is saying, a place where the book appears to take a different direction. If you see it, note it on your paper. It will be a topic for discussion on Day 7.

### ***DAY SIX***

Now that you have read 1 Thessalonians chapter by chapter, read straight through the entire book in one sitting. Again, watch for a natural division in the book. You may have seen this break yesterday when you reviewed your notes, but if you didn’t see it try to notice it now. Watch carefully what Paul covers in the first three chapters, and then notice how chapter 4 opens. What shift does Paul’s letter make in its contents and/or direction?

### ***DAY SEVEN***

Store in your heart: 1 Thessalonians 5:23. Read and discuss: If you are studying in a group setting, choose four people to read the last three verses of each of the first four chapters of 1 Thessalonians. Then have a fifth person read 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28.

If you are studying on your own, simply read these verses for yourself.

### ***QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR INDIVIDUAL STUDY***

According to the text, who is the author of 1 Thessalonians?

To whom was 1 Thessalonians written?

According to 1 Thessalonians 5:27, what *kind* of literature or writing is 1 Thessalonians?

Where did the words *affliction(s)* or its synonyms *suffering* and *tribulation* appear in your study this week? What did you learn from marking these words?

If you are in a class setting and have access to a white-board, an overhead projector, or can put up “Write-On Cling Sheets“ and write on them, list insights as people share. Visual aids are a real asset in teaching, as the very \_\_\_\_\_ seeing of what is being said and discussed aids the memory. Ask the 5 W’s and an H:

- a. **Who** suffered or was afflicted?
- b. What was the reason they suffered?
- c. When did their affliction, suffering, or tribulation occur? **Where**?
- d. Why did they suffer?
- e. How were they afflicted, or how did they suffer?

Now review every reference to the Lord’s *coming* and list observations. (Again examine the references in the light of the 5 W’s and an H.) You might ask questions like these:

- a. Who is involved in His coming?
- b. What do you learn about the Son?
- c. Where will we, believers, be at His coming?
- d. What will we be like at His coming?

Take time to think through the general content of each chapter of 1 Thessalonians chapter by chapter. Again, list your insights.

- a. Did you notice the “break” in the context of the book? What happens at chapter 4? What change in direction or subject do you note in this epistle (letter)?
- b. What did you learn as a result of this week’s lesson?

### ***THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK***

You—sanctified entirely! Set apart for God, holy in spirit, soul, and body! It’s an awesome thought, isn’t it? Especially in the light of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Wouldn’t it be wonderful to have the confidence to know that when you stand before the Lord Jesus Christ to give an account of your life (and we all will stand before Him) that you will be able to stand there without blame...unashamed?

Do you realize, my friend, how Jesus Christ prayed for you just before He was arrested, taken to an illegal trial, and convicted and given over to crucifixion? He prayed, “I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth” ( John 17:15-19).

Won’t you make it your goal, beloved child of God, to be the answer to your Lord’s prayer?

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