

# **BIBLE**

## **SYNTHESIS V**

### **NEW TESTAMENT HISTORY (MATTHEW - ACTS)**

## **THE SYNTHETIC METHOD OF BIBLE STUDY**

We are entering into what is called the *synthetic study of the Bible*, which means the study of the Bible as a whole, and each book in its relation to the other books. This study endeavors to show the relation of Bible book to Bible book, and considers the whole Bible by looking at its parts.

Synthesis consists of the combining of parts into a complex whole. The opposite of this is analysis, which means the taking apart of the whole so that it may be analyzed part by part. In synthesis, one looks at the Bible as a whole. Of course, this is a difficult thing to do, in view of the complexity of the Bible, coupled with the limitations of the human mind. The Bible is much more than the human mind can comprehend in its fullness. The student of this course is encouraged to consider these facts in this study of the Bible by the synthetic method.

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**BIBLE SURVEY**  
**or**  
**THE SYNTHETIC METHOD OF BIBLE STUDY**

**General Introduction**

**1. AN INTRODUCTION TO BIBLE SYNTHESIS**

(1) Meaning:

*Synthesis* (Greek, *sun-*, together, and *tithenai*, to place). 1. The putting together of parts or elements so as to form a whole. A putting together or building up of the Bible, or of Bible truth, book by book. It is the opposite of Bible analysis, which involves taking apart for a minute study of each part.

(2) Purpose:

- To determine -

-1. The message of a whole book, or of a group of books, or of the Bible as a whole.

-2. The relationship of one book or group of books to other books or groups of books.

(3) Method:

-1. Reading each book of the Bible carefully at least once

-2. Looking at an introduction of each book

-3. Studying an outline of each book

-4. Doing assigned outside reading

-5. Writing research papers

**NOTE:**

There is a vast number of books in the world (see Eccl. 12:12), in fact, there are so many that it would be necessary to spend many human lifespans for one to even read them through rapidly. **But** there is only one book which is binding upon the hearts and consciences of men. That book is the Bible. God is its Author, and He wrote it to His own creatures. Man is the creation of God, the Bible is the *how-to* book giving us the key to what makes us tick.

**2. INTRODUCTION TO THE WHOLE BIBLE**

(1) Author:

The Holy spirit, using 36 or more holy men, from Moses (or the writer of Job) to the Apostle John (Ex. 34:27; Jer. 30:1-2; II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:21; Rev. 1:19).

(2) Addressees:

Mankind, unbelievers and believers alike — John 20:31; I John 5:13.

(3) Date, or Period:

- 1. Of coverage: From creation to eternity future — Gen. 1:1 to Rev. 22:5
- 2. Of writing: From about 1500 B.C. (?Job?) to about 96 A.D. (Rev.)

(4) Circumstances:

To reveal God’s truth to man (I Cor. 2:9-10), so man might know God, himself, Christ, and righteousness (salvation).

(5) Number of books:

There are 66 books (39 in the Old Testament, 27 in the New Testament)

(6) Structure of the Bible

- 1. Two divisions — Old Testament and New Testament
- 2. The Old Testament is three times as large as the New.

*Since God has given so much more material in the Old Testament than in the new, He must want His people to study the Old as well as the New. It is impossible to understand the New Testament completely without a knowledge of the Old. “The New is in the Old concealed, the Old is by the New revealed.”*

“The New \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
the Old \_\_\_\_\_ .”

-3. The Old Testament is divided into:

Law	–	5 books	– <i>Synthesis I</i>
History	–	12 books	– <i>Synthesis II</i>
Poetry	–	5 books	– <i>Synthesis III</i>
Prophecy	–	17 books	– <i>Synthesis IV</i>
Major Prophets	–	5 books	
Minor Prophets	–	12 books	

**[A convenient memory device is 5, 12, 5, 5, 12.]**

-4. The New Testament is divided into:

History	–	5 books	– <i>Synthesis V</i>
(The 4 Gospels and Acts)			
Epistles	–	21 books	– <i>Synthesis VI</i>
(These can be divided even more.)			
Prophecy	–	1 book (The Revelation)	

(7) Theme of the Bible:

Doctrine (teaching), reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness -  
II Timothy 3:16

The Lord Jesus Christ and redemption through Him (Luke 24:27; John 5:39–40). The Bible reveals to us the justice, grace and the glory of God (Romans 1:16–17; Titus 2:11; Revelation 21:23).

(8) Key thought of the Bible:

God’s love for a world of sinners - John 3:16

(9) Key verse of the Bible:

II Timothy 3:16

(Some say Romans 3:26 is the key verse of the Bible.)

### **3. INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT**

(Covered in Synthesis I, II, III, IV)

### **4. INTRODUCTION TO THE PENTATEUCH**

(Covered in Synthesis I — The Pentateuch)

### **5. INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORICAL BOOKS**

(Covered in Synthesis II — The Books of History)

### **6. INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOKS OF POETRY**

(Covered in Synthesis III — The Books of Poetry)

### **7. INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOKS OF PROPHECY**

(Covered in Synthesis IV — The Books of Prophecy)

### **8. INTRODUCTION TO THE SILENT YEARS**

- This is the period between the Old Testament and the New. It has been called “the four hundred silent years,” because the prophets were silent from Malachi to John the Baptist. As we shall see in Matt. 11:13, “... all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.” John was the last of the prophets, and the forerunner of Christ.

(1) Political History

- The Times of the Gentiles were in effect, as they still are. Babylon was the first Empire of this period. It fell in 539 B.C. Politically, Israel was almost entirely under the domination of the Gentile world Empires. It was only during the revolt of the Maccabees that Israel gained a measure of autonomy and independence, and that only for a short time.
- Daniel 11 gives a preview of the history of this era (This is covered by this writer’s notes, *Daniel 11 and History*, which correlates Daniel 11, verse by verse, and phrase by phrase, with the actual events of history).

-1. Persia (Medo-Persia) — 539—331 B.C.

- (1. With the overthrow of the Babylonian Empire, the Persians (Cyrus) encouraged the Jews to return to the land. A small group returned under Zerubbabel and Joshua (the Priest), they rebuilt the Temple, and the city. The Old Testament ends with the people back in the land of promise under the rule of Persia.
- (2. For the most part the Persians were mild and tolerant toward the Jews.
- (3. Persian rule continued for about 100 years after the close of the Old Testament canon (Malachi). Persia was then overthrown by Alexander the Great in 331 B.C., and Israel came under the dominion of the Greek Empire.

-2. Greece — 331—166 B.C.

- (1. Alexander the Great succeeded his father Philip in 336 B.C.
- (2. His army swept quickly through Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt, and Mesopotamia from 334 to 331 B.C.
  - He conquered Israel in 332.
  - He conquered Egypt the same year and founded the city of Alexandria.
  - One of the results of Alexander's conquests was the dissemination of the Greek language, culture, and its philosophy. This affected a large population, and it had a very beneficial effect upon the writing of the New Testament and the spread of the Gospel across the Greek-speaking Roman Empire.
- (3. Alexander died suddenly in 323 B.C. and was succeeded by his four generals who subsequently fought among themselves for supremacy. Finally the Empire was divided as follows:
  1. Cassander took Macedonia
  2. Lysimachus took Thrace and much of Asia Minor
  3. Seleucus took Syria
  4. Ptolemy took Egypt
- (4. By 281 B.C. the Empire was divided among three:
  1. Antigonids ruled Macedonia
  2. The Seleucids ruled Syria
  3. The Ptolemies ruled Egypt
- (5. Israel became the battleground between the Seleucids to the north and the Ptolemies to the south (See Dan. 11:5–20).
  - Great numbers of Jews settled in Egypt during the period from 323–198 B.C. These people adopted the Greek language. The Septuagint (LXX) translation of the New Testament from Hebrew to Greek was begun about 285 B.C.
- (6. The most vicious of the Seleucids was Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164) who turned his hatred against Israel (Dan. 11:28). He profaned the Temple by placing a statue of Zeus in it, and by offering a sow upon the altar (Dan.8:9–12; 11:31).
- (7. The result of this was the revolt of the Maccabees led by the aged priest Matathias and his five sons in 166 B.C.

-3. Maccabees — 166—63 B.C.

- These were Hasmonaean Jews, and were a family of priests.
- They were called Maccabees because of Judas Maccabaeus, a distinguished member of the house of the Hasmonaean. *Maccabaeus* meant. “the hammer.”
- The Hasmonaean family exercised power until Pompey brought Israel under Roman control.

-4. Rome — Began 63 B.C.

- The period of Roman rule in which we are interested is from 63 to 4 B.C. This is from the time when Pompey brought the land of Israel under Roman dominion until the birth of Christ.

(1. Antipater, an Idumaeen (Edomite—descendant of Esau) ruled for Rome —55—43 B.C.

(2. Herod the Great was king of Judæa —37—4 B.C.

- *Herod* was not a personal name, but the family name, or surname.
- He was son of Antipater, and was married to Mariamne, a descendant of the Hasmonians. He later murdered her.
- Herod was an Idumaeen. John Hyrcanus, a Hasmonian, brought the Idumaeans into Israel about 130 B.C. They accepted circumcision and embraced the Jewish religion, but the Jews regarded them with great suspicion and prejudice. They were regarded as “half Jews.”

(3. *Herod* the Great was in power when Jesus Christ was born. He was a very cruel man—a heathen in practice and a monster in character. He is the one who attempted to destroy the Messiah (Matt. 2:1–12).

- This is the man who was in power when the New Testament begins.
- **Assignment:** Read about Herod in a Bible dictionary or other help, and write any additional observations you may have.

(2) Religious History of the Period between the Testaments

- The 400 years between Malachi and the birth of Christ brought great changes in Jewish life.
- At the time of Malachi’s prophecy, about 400 years before Christ, the nations had slipped into spiritual indifference and moral decay. Although, God had not been inactive during those years. He was preparing His people for the coming of His son.

(1. There was an important new institution not seen in the Old Testament, but which became very prominent in the New. (**Assignment:** Research the following, using a good Bible handbook, a Bible dictionary or encyclopedia, or other such help.):

1. The Synagogues

(2. There were some significant writings in addition to the Hebrew Old Testament, and which were very influential in the nation Israel during the time of Christ and afterward. (**Assignment:** Research the following, as above):

1. The Septuagint (LXX)

2. The Targums

3. The Talmud
4. The Apocrypha

(3. There were a number of new sects and parties. (**Assignment:** Research the following, as above.):

1. The Pharisees
2. The Sadducees
3. The Herodians

(3) Preparation for the Coming of the Son

(1. God had prepared the nation Israel for the coming of the Son.

1. The nation Israel had been dispersed and under Gentile rule for about 600 years.
2. The Jewish Synagogues were scattered over the Roman Empire. This not only perpetuated Jewish teaching but it facilitated the spread of the Gospel.
3. The Septuagint put the Old Testament in the language of the dispersed Jews.
4. The monotheism of the Jews, along with their Messianic hope prepared the world for the coming of Christ and Christianity.

(2. The Lord had prepared the world for the coming of the Son.

1. There was a common language and culture, the Greek language coupled with its learning and culture. This facilitated the spread of the Gospel.
2. The Roman Empire was vast, and powerful. There was a “Roman peace” which had the armed might to enforce it. There was a common government with common laws.
3. The Romans had built their highways all across that empire, making it possible for the Missionaries of the Gospel to travel with relative ease.
4. We shall see how God moved the Great Roman Empire in such a way that all of the purposes of God should be fulfilled.

(3. Preparation for the Greek New Testament

1. The conquests of Alexander the Great introduced a *lingua franca* into the world of that day. This was the Koiné Greek, the Greek of the common people.
2. This language affected the Jews of the dispersion and brought about the translation of the Old Testament into Greek (the Septuagint, or LXX).
3. The Septuagint was the Bible of the Christians during the New Testament era.
4. The New Testament was first written in that language of the world, which was so universally understood and used.