Ezra and Augustine and Their Influence on Biblical Interpretation
First, Some Important Vocabulary

- Hermeneutics – the art and science of _____, especially the interpretation of Scripture (Acts 14:12) From the Greek word Ἑρμῆς "Hermes" – the Greek messenger god known in Latin as "_____" Key verse: 2 Timothy 2:15
- Exegesis – allowing the Scriptures to unfold their _____ intended meaning without imposing our theological viewpoint on the text.
- Exposition – the result of sound exegesis; what God intended for a passage of Scripture to mean to its original _____.
- Homiletics – the art and science of applying the fruits of exposition to connect with a _____ hearer/reader through appropriate _____.
- Orthodoxy- Biblically _____ Beliefs – what we ought to believe. (Literally – straight _____/doctrine)
- Orthopraxy – Biblically Correct _____ – how we ought to behave. (Literally – straight _____)
- Eisegesis – the _____ practice of reading a theology or worldview into a passage of Scripture; _____ the original meaning of Scripture to conform to a theological system (i.e. Covenant theology) or practice.

Why Choose These Two Interpreters of the Word of God?

Ezra will impress us with his great _____ for the Word of God and his _____ handling of it. We owe so much to him and his careful collection of the manuscripts of the Old Testament and their careful transmission to us through the scribes he headed.

Augustine _____ the tools to carefully handle the Word of God and yet laid the foundations for both the Roman _____ Church and _____. Calvin referred to Augustine in his Institutes over 370 times and directly quoted him 150 times. Calvin claimed, "Augustine is so wholly with me, that if I wished to write a confession of my faith, I could do so with all fullness of satisfaction to myself out of his writings."

Ezra

Ezra was a _____ from the line of Hilkiah of the line of Aaron. (Ezra 7:1)

- He had been _____ during the captivity of Judah in Babylon and Persia.
- He impressed Artaxerxes, King of Persia, enough that he sent him with authority to teach the returning exiled Jews the Law of Moses and "the (good) _____ of the LORD" was on him. (Ezra 7:6, 9, 28; 8:18, 22, 31)
  - Implies Personal Relationship
  - Implies Approval
  - Implies Authority
  - Implies Protection

"For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel." (Ezra 7:10, NKJV)

- Ezra is a shortened form of the Hebrew name "Azariah" meaning "Yahweh has _____" – every time Ezra heard his name, he was reminded of God's _____ to him.
- He was a man of the Bible. He "prepared" (kun) "firmly established," "rooted," or "_____" himself in the "Law of the LORD" (Torah – meaning "instruction" and probably referring to the OT as it existed in his day.)
  - Note the _____ of the three infinitives here: to seek, to do, and to teach.
  - "Seek" is "baqash" (Lit. to search carefully for). Ezra was first a student of the Word of God.

1   **Scripture References**: Acts 14:8-12; 2 Timothy 2:15; Ezra 7:10; Romans 13:11–12; Ezra 7:1, 6, 9, 10, 25-26, 28; 8:18, 22, 31; 9:6-15; Nehemiah 1-2; 8:5–6,7-9; Deuteronomy 31:10-13; Matthew 23:4; Micah 5:2

- o "To do" is "asah," and it is a word associated with creation – "God made." It means a detailed execution of God's will.
- o "To teach" is "lamad," and it carries the idea of teaching what you know yourself.

Ezra's Situation

- Zerubbabel led a group of Jewish _____ back to Jerusalem under Persian Kings Cyrus and Darius to rebuild the Temple.
- Most of the people had been born in _____ in Babylon and had lost the ability to understand _____, as they spoke Aramaic.
- The Persian King, Artaxerxes, out of his own treasury sent Ezra, the scribe and priest, to bring _____ to the temple and bring law and order to Jerusalem. Ezra was commanded to appoint leaders and to teach the people the _____ of God. (Ezra 7:25-26)
- Ezra finds the exiles totally _____ of the Law of God and _____ with the Canaanites and other pagan people which was expressly forbidden in the Law. (Ezra 9)
- The great intercessory prayer of Ezra is one of the great _____ of the Bible. (Ezra 9:6-15) And as a result, the people had great _____ of heart and put away their pagan spouses.
- Word of the ruined condition of Jerusalem's walls comes to _____, a high official in the Persian court of Artaxerxes, and he is appointed governor of Jerusalem and tasked to rebuild the walls (Nehemiah 1-2). _____ Nehemiah and Ezra are able to fortify the city and bring a great _____ to the nation of Israel.

Ezra's Solution – Clearly Teaching the Word of God

- A _____ Worshipful People -Nehemiah 8:5–6 cf. Deuteronomy 31:10-13
- A _____ Worthy Process -Nehemiah 8:8
  - o So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God – They _____ and _____ handled the Word with the meaning of the original text. Ezra gave them the _____ of God.
  - o The Hebrew word פרש "parash" "read distinctly" is used in the sense of giving a _____.
    - These Jews to a large extent had been born and raised in captivity.
    - During that time many of them lost or never learned the ability to read and understand _____.
    - Ezra clearly and carefully translated the Bible from Hebrew to the Aramaic his people knew.
  - o "Giving the sense" (NKJV, ASV, KJV), is variously translated "imparting understanding (NET)," "giving the meaning" (LEB) and (HCSB).
    - The underlying Hebrew word means to "teach _____ that brings success."
    - When the people left the reading Ezra did, they _____ what the Bible taught.
  - o "Helped them understand the reading" is the same word used in verses 7 and 9 and is translated "taught."
    - This is the idea of making _____ of Biblical truth.
    - God did not give us His Word to fill notebooks to be put on the _____ but to be hidden in our _____ that we might know how to live.
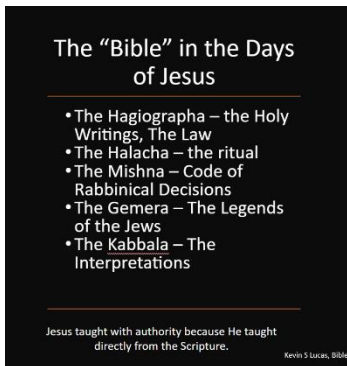
Ezra's Other Contributions

Ezra understood that God's people needed to have _____ to the Bible. While he did not create the Synagogue (it formed in captivity), it was championed by him, for he knew the way to _____ most of the people was to _____ the Word of God to them.

2   **Scripture References**: Acts 14:8-12; 2 Timothy 2:15; Ezra 7:10; Romans 13:11–12; Ezra 7:1, 6, 9, 10, 25-26, 28; 8:18, 22, 31; 9:6-15; Nehemiah 1-2; 8:5–6,7-9; Deuteronomy 31:10-13; Matthew 23:4; Micah 5:2

- Ezra made sure there was a Bible for the people to know. This happened in three ways:
  - First, he _____ the Psalms, the Proverbs, and other existing Scripture which was recognized as authoritative and _____ them into the Bible.
  - Second, Ezra is widely recognized as the _____ of several Bible books, especially the books of Chronicles and _____.
  - Ezra realized he must leave the Hebrew Bible for generations to come, and so scribes trained by Ezra set up a careful regime of how to _____ the Word of God. That we have the thousands of _____ of the Old Testament is a testament to Ezra.

Ezra's Failures

God has no grandchildren. Each generation of believers are responsible for the transfer of the faith from one generation to another. Ezra's _____ arise out of his followers not taking Ezra's _____ forward. For the sake of time, I will only mention three things:

The "Bible" in the Days of Jesus
- The Hagiographa – the Holy Writings, The Law
- The Halacha – the ritual
- The Mishna – Code of Rabbinical Decisions
- The Gemera – The Legends of the Jews
- The Kabbala – The Interpretations

Jesus taught with authority because He taught directly from the Scripture.
Kevin S Lucas, Bible T

1. Ezra's love for and teaching of the Scriptures indirectly led to the desire on the part of later scribes to _____ the Bible (OT) with _____ of commentary about rituals (Halacha), rabbinical decisions (Mishna), legends of the fathers (Gemera), and mystical interpretations (Kabbala).

2. Ezra loved the Word of God and trained his followers to expertly _____ the Old Testament to the people. But over time, the scribes became the _____ and not the Bible. Matthew 23:4

3. Perhaps Ezra's followers' greatest failure was their _____ of _____ in the Bible they so laboriously copied. Matthew 2:1-6

Augustine

Augustine, the darling of the Roman Catholic Church, the Calvinist reformers, and Liberal Academic Christians who embrace "Amillennialism," who lived 400 years _____ Christ's resurrection and ascension has done a great deal of _____ to Christianity.

Augustine was born on AD November 13, 354, as Aurelius Augustinus (called Austin by his closest friends), in the north _____ city of Thagaste in the Roman province of Numidia (modern _____). He died in AD August 28, 430 (75 Years old).

Early Life

- His father (Patricus) was a _____ and a man of some authority and _____ status. He was a town Burgess (minor Roman magistrate). Patricus had enough money to start Augustine's first-rate _____, first in Thagaste, and then in the nearby town of Madauros.
  - Listened to the best lecturers (sometimes very reluctantly).
  - Made opportunities to teach rhetoric.
  - And gave himself entirely to _____ pleasures – wine, women, and pleasure-seeking of all kinds.
  - During most of his years from 15 to 30, he lived with a concubine whose name he never revealed. When Augustine was 18, his concubine bore him a _____ whom he named Adeodatus (from the Latin "a gift of God").

3   **Scripture References**: Acts 14:8-12; 2 Timothy 2:15; Ezra 7:10; Romans 13:11–12; Ezra 7:1, 6, 9, 10, 25-26, 28; 8:18, 22, 31; 9:6-15; Nehemiah 1-2; 8:5–6,7-9; Deuteronomy 31:10-13; Matthew 23:4; Micah 5:2

Family's Messed Up "Christianity"

- **Father's Example**: Patricus waited until just before his _____ (when Augustine was 16 years of age) to be baptized. The rationale was that _____ expunged original sin and every other sin committed up and to the point of baptism. Thus, men like Constantine and Patricus waited until their deathbeds to be baptized, mistakenly believing that they would have to suffer less in _____.

- **The Original Helicopter Mother** - _____, Augustine's helicopter mother, was deeply devout and utterly fixated on the "salvation" of her son, Augustine. Without going into great detail (and we could), Monica was a mass of _____.
  - o She ached for Augustine to share her _____ in the Catholic Church.
  - o Yet at the same time, she had not had him baptized as a _____ for the same reason that Patricus had not been baptized until his deathbed.
  - o In fact, she encouraged him to get his "wild oats" sown that when he was baptized, he might have an easier time living up to the standard of the _____ church of his day.

Seeking "Truth" in All the Wrong Places

- Meanwhile, Augustine read a Ciceronian treatise that he later describes as his first step in the _____ pilgrimage ultimately leading to his "conversion."
  - o Elevated and inspired by the asceticism of Cicero's philosophical treatise, Hortensius, Augustine began his journey as a "_____ after truth" and "immortal wisdom."
  - o When he looked at the Scriptures, young Augustine found them _____, which led him to be _____.
  - o From the age of 19, he spent nearly a decade as a "hearer" of Manichaeism, a _____ philosophy/religion steeped in gloomy _____ and recommending asceticism.

The Professor and the Preacher

Settling in _____, Augustine taught rhetoric for a while. The following year, Symmachus, the prefect of the city, appointed Augustine as a professor of rhetoric in _____, a city whose imperial court provided a home for emperors and whose Christian basilica provided a pulpit for one of the most famous rhetoricians of the day-Ambrose.

- We know that Augustine visited Ambrose, and Ambrose greeted him cordially. Although the two would never become close friends, Augustine might have heard the _____ from the sermons of Ambrose.
- Becoming disillusioned with the Manichaean doctrine, Augustine abandoned it but remained skeptical about the possibility of knowing any spiritual _____.
- Surprisingly, he joined the school for those seeking baptism and salvation.

Augustine's Errors

Augustine Will Go on to Codify the Roman Catholic and Calvinistic Sacramental Systems

Augustine became the bishop of _____ in Africa near his home.

- He is noted as one of the clearest writers of his day, and both the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformed Calvinistic Church adopted his "_____" system. This laid the groundwork for the Church replacing Israel (Supersessionism) since three of the sacraments _____ the system set up under the Law of Moses for Israel.
  1. Baptismal Regeneration – mirrors Circumcision of _____
  2. Confirmation – _____ Bar Mitzvah
  3. Communion (Catholic = Transubstantiation, Reformed = Consubstantiation) – mirrors _____ system

Augustine's Adoption of a Non-Literal Hermeneutic Leads to Creation of Amillennialism

- Previously we spoke of Augustine's inability to understand the _____ languages of Scripture and his attempts to mix the teachings of Aristotle, Socrates, and especially _____ with Scripture.
- In his early writings, Augustine takes the Premillennial stand of the early Church, but as he "_____" in his thinking, he created _____ which argues we are now in the Kingdom Age.
- This thinking became the bedrock of Roman Catholic Eschatology and liberal Protestant thinking.

Augustine Laid the Foundation for Calvinism

- In his "A Treatise of the Eternal Predestination of God" John Calvin: "Augustine is so wholly with me, that if I wished to write a _____ of my faith, I could do so with all fullness of satisfaction to myself out of his _____."
  - This is a shocking statement, placing the writings of Augustine on par with the Scripture. But that is not all.
  - In **The Institutes of the Christian Religion**, Calvin also heavily relies on Augustine's viewpoints, mentioning him about _____ times and directly quoting him over _____ of those times.
  - This, therefore, shows that Calvin's beliefs were the fruit of Augustine's teachings.
- Augustine confessed that he believed that nobody could be _____ of their own salvation, which would mean that, according to himself, he may or may not have been _____.
  - (Augustine) **On Rebuke and Grace** Ch.40 No One is Certain and Secure in His Own Predestination and Salvation: "For who of the multitude of believers can presume, so long as he is living in this _____ state, that he is in the number of the predestinated? Because it is necessary that in this _____ that should be kept hidden;"
  - (Augustine again from the same source): "For on account of the usefulness of this secrecy, lest, perchance, any one should be lifted up, but that all, even although they are running well, should _____, in that it is not known who may attain—on account of the usefulness of this secrecy, it must be believed that some of the children of perdition, who have not received the gift of perseverance to the end, begin to live in the faith which works by _____, and live for some time faithfully and righteously, and afterwards fall away, and are not taken away from this life before this happens to them."

We could say much more…but this is sufficient.

- Ezra was a _____ and a _____ expositor of the Word of God.
- Augustine trusted in his _____ for salvation and laid the _____ for the sacramental system of Catholicism and Reformed Theology. And John Calvin heavily relied on _____ for his theology.

Scripture References: Acts 14:8-12; 2 Timothy 2:15; Ezra 7:10; Romans 13:11–12; Ezra 7:1, 6, 9, 10, 25-26, 28; 8:18, 22, 31; 9:6-15; Nehemiah 1-2; 8:5–6,7-9; Deuteronomy 31:10-13; Matthew 23:4; Micah 5:2