

God's Choice



SABBATH—OCTOBER 12

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Ezra 7:10; Daniel 9:24-27; Daniel 8:14, 26, 27; Romans 8:28, 29; Exodus 3; Exodus 4.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘Blessed is the LORD, the God of our ancestors [our family who lived long ago]. He put the idea into the king's heart to honor the LORD's Temple in Jerusalem’ ” (Ezra, 7:27, ERV).



God wants Ezra and Nehemiah to help His people grow close to Him again.

DOES GOD CHOOSE each person to do a special task? What makes one person better at doing a job than someone else? Do we see and judge these things differently than God does? Most of us will say “Yes” to these questions. We believe there are times when God gets us ready to do an important job. He gives us a special experience or education to help us. At other times, God chooses us to serve simply because we are willing and our hearts are not proud. It is not always easy to know what God's plan for our lives is, right? The Bible is full of stories about people that God chooses to do a special job.

God chooses Ezra and Nehemiah to do a special job. God wants these men to build again the broken city and temple. That is a big job! But their job is made of many small jobs. God also tells Ezra and Nehemiah to lead the Jews back to Jerusalem. Yes, God wants Ezra and Nehemiah to build the temple. At the same time, God wants these two men to teach the people about God. God wants Ezra and Nehemiah to help His people grow close to Him again. Wow! God gives Ezra and Nehemiah a lot of important work!

GOD CHOOSES EZRA AND NEHEMIAH (Ezra 7:10)

We see that God chooses Ezra to serve Him for many reasons. (1) Ezra wants to do everything God asks. (2) Ezra is a leader. And (3) he has strong skills. He is an excellent teacher and scribe. A scribe studies the law and makes copies of it. But there is one Bible verse that shows best why God gives Ezra a special job.

What does Ezra 7:10 tell us about Ezra? The Bible says he “worked hard” to know and obey the Lord’s teachings (Ezra 7:10, ICB). What do you think Ezra does to get his heart ready to obey God’s law?

The word in Ezra 7:10 written as “worked hard” is “**kun**” in Hebrew. “**Kun**” also can be written as “get ready” or “to make firm.” So, that helps us understanding the true meaning of Ezra 7:10. Ezra makes a strong decision to follow God.

After Ezra arrives in Jerusalem, he teaches Bible truth to God’s people. Ezra teaches them for 13 years. Then the people finish building the city’s walls. They announce that everyone should meet together. They do not force anyone to come. They want to do it. They do it because of the Bible truth that Ezra taught them.

Why did God choose Nehemiah? Read Nehemiah 1:1–11 for the answer.

Nehemiah has a heart for God and for the people. He is upset when he learns that the people stopped the work in Jerusalem. Nehemiah has a love for God’s work. He tells God he is willing to help finish the work. God answers his prayers and desires. Sometimes we get a silly idea in our heads. We believe that if we love doing something it must not be from God. We think that God will give us only hard tasks that we do not want to do. But that is not true! But God often gives us things to do that we will love. He wants us to love what we do for Him!

In what ways has God chosen you to do things for Him that you love?



God wants us to love what we do for Him!

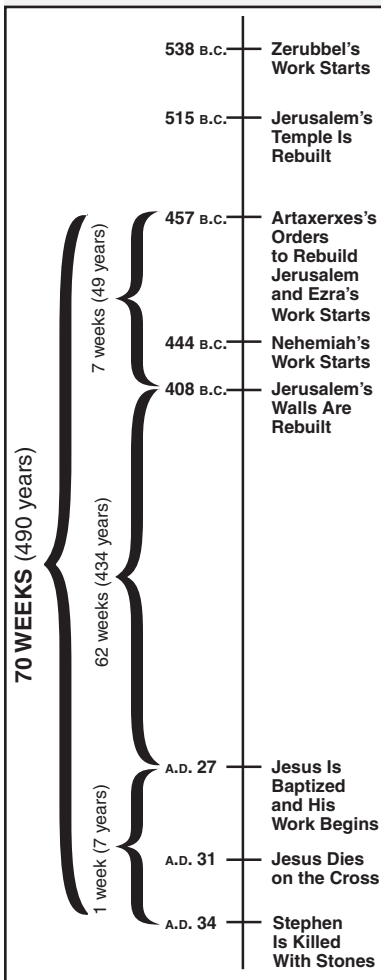
AT THE RIGHT TIME (Daniel 9:24–27)

In lesson #1, we learned that God chooses Zerubbabel (around 538 B.C.) and Ezra (457 B.C.) to do special work. In lesson #2, we learned that God also chooses Nehemiah (444 B.C.). We need to understand that God chooses these men for a special reason. Why? Because the time comes for God to keep promises that He made long ago to His people. So, God chooses these three men to help Him. Let us look at the example of Zerubbabel. God chooses Zerubbabel to do a special work at the end of the 70 years that God’s people lived in Babylon. Jeremiah talks about God’s promise to free His people after 70 years.

In what year does God choose Ezra to do important work? It is the same year that King Artaxerxes makes a special command. Why is that year important in Bible prophecy? Prophecy is a special message from God to His people. For the answer, read Daniel 9:24–27.

The angel tells Daniel, “ ‘Here is what I want you to know and understand. There will be seven “weeks.” Then there will be 62 “weeks.” The seven “weeks” will begin [start] when an order is given to build Jerusalem and make it new again. At the end of the 62 “weeks,” the Anointed [God’s Chosen] will come’ ” (Daniel 9:25, NIV). Daniel 9:27 talks about the last week of this time prophecy, or special message. We know that one week has seven days. We find a special Bible rule in Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:5, 6. These verses tell us that “days” in time prophecies are word pictures. One day equals one real year in Bible time prophecy. So, how long is one week in Bible time prophecy? One week equals seven real years. Do you see that the Bible time prophecy in Daniel 9:25 talks about 70 weeks? If we use the Bible rule for time messages, we see that Daniel 9:25 is talking about 490 real years.

When do these 70 weeks, or 490 real years, start? The Bible verse in Daniel 9:25 tells us. The 490 years start when the king gives the special command to rebuild Jerusalem. Three Persian kings give the Jews commands to rebuild: Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes. But Artaxerxes is the only king who commands the Jews to build again their city (Ezra 7:12–28). His command starts in 457 B.C., during his 7th year as king. (Read Ezra 7:7–26.)



The 70 weeks, or 490 real years, start when King Artaxerxes commands the Jews to rebuild their city, in 457 B.C.

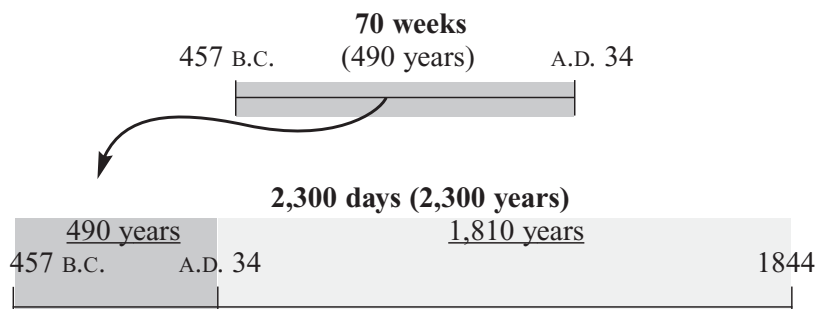
THE 70 WEEKS AND THE 2,300 DAYS (Daniel 8:14, 26, 27)

Look at Daniel 9:24, ERV: “ ‘God has allowed [given] 70 weeks [490 years] for your people.’ ” The word written as “allowed” really means “cut off.” This word is not used anywhere else in the Bible. But we do find it outside the Bible in other Jewish writings. It means “cutting off” something from another thing that is longer. So, that helps us understand that the 70 weeks, or 490 real years, must be “cut off” from a longer time message somewhere else in the Bible. But where do we find this longer prophecy, or special time message? In Daniel chapter 8. There, we read about the 2,300 days, which also are 2,300 real years.

Read about Daniel’s dream in Daniel 8. What is the one part of Daniel’s dream that he does not understand? (Read Daniel 8:14, 26, 27 for the answer.)

There are many reasons why the 70-week time message in Daniel 9:24–27 is part of the time message of the 2,300 days in Daniel 8:14. (1) Both are time prophecies, or special messages, that show what will happen in the future. (2) The angel Gabriel explains what both of these time messages mean (read Daniel 8:16 and Daniel 9:21). (3) The only part of the dream that Gabriel does not explain in Daniel 8 is the part about the 2,300 days in Daniel 8:14. (4) Daniel 8 tells the dream. Then Gabriel explains only part of it. Do you see that Daniel 9 has no dream and only an explanation? That is because it explains the only part of Daniel 8 that Gabriel does not make known to Daniel before. That part is the time message of the 2,300 days in Daniel 8:14. That is the only part of the dream that Daniel does not understand (read Daniel 8:27).

The book of Ezra gives us information that helps us understand the time messages in Daniel. Ezra helps us understand when the 2,300 days, or real years, start in history. When we know the correct date, then we will understand better Jesus’ work for us on the earth.



When we know when the 2,300 days, or real years, start, we will understand better Jesus’ work for us on earth and in heaven.

GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE (Romans 8:28, 29)

We believe that God chooses us for a special reason and for special work. Many Christians have different ideas about what that means. What does the Bible say about the subject?

Read about God's choosing us in Romans 8:28, 29. What is God's plan for us?

These verses tell us that God knew from the start who would choose to trust in Him. God chose us to "be like [the same as] his Son" (Romans 8:29, ERV) in their thoughts, feelings, and behavior. God did not choose who would be saved or lost. We have a choice. He did not take our choice away from us. God wants to change our hearts and minds. He wants our lives to show Jesus to everyone. God promises that He will change us in Romans 8:30. In that verse, Paul says that God chooses us. Then He makes us right with Him and makes us new. Then He makes us holy. We cannot change our lives. God promises to change us.



God chooses every one of us to be saved.

Read Romans 9. In this chapter, what is God choosing us for?

In Romans 9, Paul says that God chooses us to do special work. God chooses the Israelites to bring the good news about God to everyone on earth. Then God says, "As the Scriptures [the Bible] say, 'I loved Jacob, but I hated Esau' " (Romans 9:13, ERV). People have trouble understanding this verse. They think it means that God loves only one of the brothers. But that thinking is wrong. Paul says that God chooses Jacob. But God does not choose Esau. What does God choose Jacob for? God chooses Jacob to be the father of Israel. So, we learn that there are two types of choosing that God does. First, God chooses everyone to be saved. He also wants to change us to be the same as His Son Jesus. Second, God chooses different people to do special work for Him.

Why should you be happy to know that God chose you to be saved? At the same time, why are you always free to choose to reject God's gift of everlasting life?

OUR DUTY (Exodus 3; Exodus 4)

Yes, God chooses us to be saved. But we are free to accept His gift or turn from it. We also are free to accept the work He gives us or to turn away from it. God may put us somewhere to do special work for Him. But we can choose not to do that work. Yes, God wants us to do special things for Him in the same way that He wants us to become the same as Jesus. God's choices for us are part of His plan to save us. When we do the special work that God gives us to do, we show to everyone that God saves.

God makes Saul the king of Israel. But Saul never gives his heart to God. Yes, God may choose someone to do special work for Him. But that does not mean the person will obey God. God makes us free to choose. But if we do not follow God's leading, we can lose everything.

Read Exodus 3 and 4. What do these chapters teach us about what happens when the Lord chooses someone to do special work?

We can answer God the way Ezra and Nehemiah do. They obey God. They do not doubt Him. Or we can answer God the way Moses does. Moses has some fears about the job that God asks him to do. Moses obeys God in the end. But first he tells God that he does not think he is good enough to do the job. Why should the King of Egypt listen to Moses? Next, Moses worries that the Jewish people will not believe him or do what he says. Then, Moses feels that he does not have enough skills to do the job. "Then Moses says to the LORD, 'But, Lord, I am telling you, I am not a good speaker. I have never been able to speak well. And that hasn't [has not] changed since you started talking to me. I am still not a good speaker. You know that I speak slowly and don't [do not] use the best words' " (Exodus 4:10, ERV). Finally, Moses tells God to send someone else. But Moses becomes a powerful leader. He is not perfect. But he is full of faith. He does the job God gave him to do.

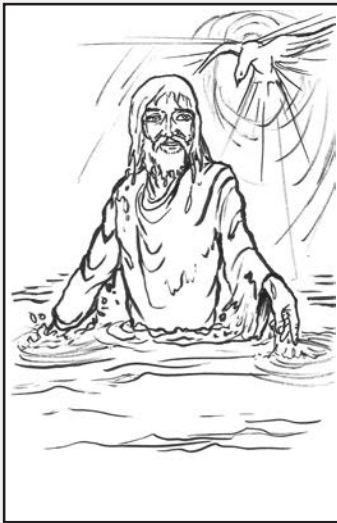
What excuses do we often make to not do the work we know that we should do?



Moses tells God to send someone else.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read carefully Prophets and Kings, pages 697–699, about the 70-week prophecy and when it happened in history.

“The Bible tells us many things before they happen. The Bible told us about Jesus’ First Coming. It told us when God planned to pour His Holy Spirit on Him. The Bible also told us about Jesus’ death before it happens. God gave the Jewish people these special messages, or time prophecies. God wanted His people to understand what was going to happen in the future. Everything God promised His people happened when Jesus came to the earth. Jesus told His followers that it was important to study Bible prophecies. In Matthew 24:15, Jesus told His followers to read about the prophecy for their time in the book of Daniel. That is why Jesus said, ‘You who read this should understand what it means.’ Matthew 24:15 [ERV]. After Jesus woke up from the dead, He explained to His followers ‘everything that had been written about himself in the Scriptures [the Bible].’ Luke 24:27 [ERV]. The Savior gave the prophets, or special messengers, their messages. ‘The Spirit of Christ was in those prophets. And the Spirit was telling about the sufferings that would happen to Christ and about the glory that would come after those sufferings.’ 1 Peter 1:11 [ERV].”
—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 234, adapted.



“[The Bible] told us when God planned to pour His Holy Spirit on [Jesus].”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Think more about this idea: God chooses you to do something you love to do. What are some important rules you can follow to help you know you are doing what God wants?
- ② Read the story about Jonah. How does Jonah answer God’s plan for his life? What lessons can we learn from Jonah’s experience? Now look at Paul’s example. What does Paul do when the Lord asked him to serve Him? (Read Acts 9:1–20.) Compare Jonah’s experience with Paul’s. How are they different?
- ③ Think about the story of Judas Iscariot. (Read *The Desire of Ages*, page 716.) Does God “choose” Judas to turn against Jesus? If so, how fair is that to Judas? God gives Judas many chances to do the right thing. But in the end, Judas makes the wrong choice. What does his story teach us about the power of free choice in our lives?