

“Peanut Butter Religion”

[aka “Choices”]

by Mark J Ward

Joshua 24:15 & I Kings 18:21

INTRODUCTION

1. When I was a lad, I carried my lunch to school most days. I had a lot of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches in my brown paper sack for school lunches. I LOVE peanut butter and jelly sandwiches!!! I really love to focus on the *jelly options* (strawberry, grape and mixed fruit...), but today we would like to consider what I call “*peanut butter religion*”!
2. This lesson is about “*our spiritual choices in life*”!
3. “Choose you this day...” popular verse on walls in many folks’ homesa passage in Joshua 24:15
4. We sometimes sing the spiritual song “Dare to Stand Like Joshua” concerning his faith in stating that the children of Israel *could indeed take the land of Canaan* (with the help of God)!
5. Elijah on Mount Carmel: *450 prophets of Baal vs. Elijah & the true and living God Almighty!*
6. We have plenty of choices throughout our lives! These choices will almost always have consequences: some terribly bad, but some can have very good outcomes. So, what are the *right spiritual choices* in our lives today, especially with regards to: how to become and live as a Christian and where and how we should worship God in local congregations???

I. Setting the Scenes in Joshua 24:14-18 & I Kings 18:15-40.....

A. Joshua 24:14-18 - NASB

“Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. “If it is disagreeable in your sight to **serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve**: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” The people answered and said, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; for the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did these great signs in our sight and preserved us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed. The LORD drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God.”

B. I Kings 18:20-24 - NKJV

“So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel. And Elijah came to all the people, and said, “How long will you falter between two opinions? **If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.**” But the people answered him not a word. Then Elijah said to the people, “I alone am left a prophet of the LORD; but Baal’s prophets *are* four hundred and fifty men. Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay *it* on the wood, but put no fire *under it*; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay *it* on the wood, but put no fire *under it.* Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God who answers by fire, He is God.” So all the people answered and said, “It is well spoken.”

II. The Best Solution for Making Great Choices: “The Solution(s) that are Pleasing to God”

A. Hebrews 13:20, 21 - NKJV

“Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever

and ever. Amen.”

B. 2 Corinthians 5:5-15 - NASB

“Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— for we walk by faith, not by sight— we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences. We are not again commending ourselves to you but *are* giving you an occasion to be proud of us, so that you will have *an answer* for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.”

C. The “right choices” we make are the choices in life that are **pleasing to God!**

D. Remember Jesus’ statement in Matthew 4:4 - But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’ ”

III. Choices Each of Us Will Probably Make in Our Lifetime...

A. Our religious affiliation...*Just how important* do we think this decision is in our lives?

1. Those far afield & others believe they are in error: atheists, agnostics, worshipers of Satan...

2. Eastern religions; Catholicism; Protestant denominations; independent & community churches that teach/practice error on plan of salvation & the work/worship of the local church; Mormons, “Jehovah’s Witnesses”, Christian Scientists, and others vs. the one true faith & body of the Bible?

B. To become a Christian (but *which plan of salvation* will we choose? *Will we defer to God’s Word?*)

1. *Doing nothing... ”all will be saved regardless” (Universalism)*

2. *Faith only (several Protestant denominations)*

3. *Faith + Sinner’s Prayer (other Protestant denominations)*

4. *Faith + Altar Call, “Praying Through” for Holy Spirit Baptism (numerous Pentecostal denominations)*

5. *Water Baptism for the remission of sins for a penitent, believer who confesses with the mouth that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God (per Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15,16; Rom. 10:9,10,17; Lk. 13:3; Acts 2:38; 8:36-38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3,4; Gal. 3:26,27; 1 Pet. 3:21).*

C. Who will we marry?

1. What type of criteria will we use in choosing a life’s mate?

2. *Outward beauty vs inward beauty (will this person help me get to heaven?)*

3. *Will we have children? If so, how will they be raised with regards to God and religious faith and obedience?*

4. Given God’s will on the *permanence of marriage* (Mt. 19:9; Rom. 7:1-3) *we should take heed*

D. What type of occupation/job will we choose?

1. *Is the job we choose “honorable and proper” for a child of God to engage in?*

2. *Will the job ask us to miss the services of the local congregation?*

3. *Does the nature and/or duties of this job present “temptation problems” we need to consider?*

E. Where will we choose to live?

1. Will there be a *sound local congregation* in or near the town we choose to live in?

2. How much consideration/weight should be given to *this question* as opposed to *the job we seek?*

- F. How often will we attend the services of the local church?
1. *Make every effort to attend them all?*
 2. *10 percent? 25 percent? 50 percent?*
 3. *As we "feel like it" and it "suits us"?*
- G. What will we contribute monetarily (and otherwise) to the Lord's church where we are a member?
1. *Whatever we feel like regardless of how great or how small an amount?*
 2. *More than the 10 percent the Jews were required to give under the old law of Moses?*
 3. *Less than the 10 percent the Jews were required to give under the old law of Moses?*
 4. *The 10 percent like the Jews were required to give under the old law of Moses?*
- H. What approach(s) will we take concerning how we choose what to *believe, teach and practice* as a child of God: (a) in matters of *individual action/worship*, (b) in matters that are *congregational action/worship*?
- I. How will we *deal and interact with our brethren with whom we may differ* on things that are:
- (a) *mandatory* to please God?
 - (b) *optional, but scriptural* with regards to pleasing God? or...
 - (c) *forbidden* by God?

CONCLUSION

1. Yes, there are plenty of choices that we will make in our lifetime.
2. Many of our choices will be rather complex and difficult at times.
3. Some choices that others make may make us angry at times.
4. In all these and other things, let us try our best to **"Please God"** in our choices and interactions with those who are, and are not, our brethren!

"If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." Romans 12:18 (NASB)

"Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ." Galatians 6:1,2 (NASB)

I Timothy 6 - Please read the *ENTIRE* chapter on fighting the good fight of faith in order to lay hold on eternal life!!! We must take offensive action as soldiers of Jesus Christ in the fight against sin and error!

Additional info for your study and consideration:

- *Peanut Butter Religion* article by Mark J Ward
<https://religiousinstructor.info/peanut-butter-religion/>
- *Predestination and Free-will* article by Joe R. Price
http://www.bibleanswer.com/2001_Vol_05_No_36_02Dec.htm#predestination
- *When Brethren Disagree* article by Mark J Ward
<https://religiousinstructor.info/when-brethren-disagree/>

Thanks for your kind consideration of this wonderful and interesting study!

If you would like to have a FREE BIBLE STUDY by phone
at a mutually convenient time, please contact:

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