# WHAT HAVE YOU CHOSEN?

The most important question You ever will be asked

J. A. Moore

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#### Published by

Moore's Long Range Weather Forecasting Pty Ltd T/As Permanent Memories P O Box 445 Wangaratta Vic 3676 Australia ABN 74 083 491 285 www.whathaveyouchosen.com.au

© J.A. Moore - First printing 2009 Second printing 2010 Third printing 2010

ISBN 978-0-9806035-1-4

Artwork by Barry Akers. Edited by Owen Salter, Barnabas Editorial Services and Training Printed by Hansen Printing Wangaratta

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### What Have You Chosen?

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#### Introduction

It has been said that nothing clarifies your mind like knowing you will be executed in the morning!

Equally, the vital question "Will I go to Heaven when I die?" demands the full focus of our thoughts. It is inevitable that we will die, and for any of us it could unexpectedly happen in the very near future.

Most people establish their spiritual belief from their family, peers, friends and life's experiences without giving it much serious thought.

This belief can be that God does or does not exist.

If they believe that God exists, many think that because "God allows bad things to happen to good people", he must be a distant, callous God. That doesn't fit their worldview image of what God *should* be like and they don't want to have anything to do with him.

Others believe that God is a "lovesick" God who will not turn anyone away from Heaven, irrespective of what they may have done or thought.

Then suddenly an incident happens and the time for serious thought is gone, forever! What happened to the people in this story is what "God's Instruction Manual", the Holy Bible, says they would have experienced.

Let's hear their story.

#### The Story of James and Louise

It was the start of an exciting day. But then something happened, and suddenly their lives were changed **forever**.

#### Chapter 1 - Meet James and Louise

If you had met James and Louise you would have had the feeling that you had seen them somewhere before. They were a typical, modern young couple, full of vitality, tolerant, with ambitions to have the best that life could offer. They were newly married and felt it was too early to consider starting a family. First they wanted to establish their careers and pay off the dream house they had just bought.

They had been taught at school that the world had evolved through the process of evolution, and as everything had evolved from nothing, there was no need for God. But when they saw a beautiful view across the environment or read about the exceptional designs that are in every part of the human body, they had some nagging doubts as to whether it all could have occurred by accident.

There had been an occasion once when some Christians had talked to them about God loving them, and said something about Jesus dying on the cross for their sins. But James and Louise felt they weren't sinners. And in any case, if they got involved with a goody-goody like Jesus, they might have to change their lifestyle—perhaps stop partying and having a good time. It would be so boring and they would lose control of their lives.

Control was very important to James and Louise! They wanted to be in control of all the decisions that affected their life. That way they would not be put in any uncomfortable, embarrassing or potentially painful situations. They would decide who their friends would be and how many children they would have (maybe none, if it was going to upset their comfortable lifestyle). And they would make sure they had all the enjoyment and good

things a modern life could offer. When it came to dying, that's when they really wanted to be in control—euthanasia would be the way for them. There would be no pain, suffering or indignity. When they felt it was getting too much, they would end it all.

By being in control they were sure they could look after themselves very well, and they certainly didn't want to be controlled by anyone else. "Life is very good at the moment, thank you very much!" they said. Above all they didn't feel they needed any of the guidance that God was supposed to have written in the Bible.

Anyway, didn't Christians say that their God was a God of love who couldn't, wouldn't, reject anyone? So everyone who died would go to Heaven, wouldn't they?

Well, that's what James, Louise and all their friends thought. When someone died they said things like "Mum lived a good life; I know she's up there now looking down on us", or "Bill, he certainly enjoyed a beer. I can see him up there now, leaning on the bar, having one beer after another." As far as they were concerned, going to Heaven (if it existed) when you died was a sure thing—it didn't matter how you had lived your life.

And then the unthinkable happened.



James and Louise were driving up a winding road to a mountain resort. It was early in the morning, just as dawn was breaking. The air was cold and crisp following a heavy frost.

James was driving fast to get to the resort, because as an amateur photographer he wanted to be there in time to get photos of the sun rising over Black Mountain. The mountain road was narrow, with tight bends. As he came down a steep slope approaching a hairpin bend, he was travelling a bit too fast, so he applied the brakes. But with black ice on the bitumen, suddenly the car slewed sideways. James instinctively pushed harder on the brake pedal, but this only made things worse. Louise screamed as the car shot over the edge of the road and grabbed the seat as the car hung in mid-air over a 100-metre drop. Then it plunged down the mountainside, striking rocks and trees on the way and ending as a crumpled, steaming wreck at the bottom.



#### Chapter 2 - The shock of finding life after death!

When James and Louise became conscious (or thought they were), they found themselves hovering above what remained of the car. They could see two lifeless bodies in the twisted metal. As they looked down, it gradually dawned on them that the bodies were theirs. They had been killed in the crash.

"Why are we seeing this!" said Louise. Abruptly the implications of what she was experiencing started to sink in. "There must be life after death after all," she continued in anguish. "Everyone who said there was nothing after death, just oblivion, was deceived and we were fools to believe them!" She started to sob. "All we had, our new house, our car. Everything we'd planned, our holidays in Europe. It's all no use to us now."

"I'm so sorry," said James, his voice trembling. "I didn't mean to drive so fast. It was ... it was just so exciting. How stupid I was! We thought we had it so good, and now, in a few seconds, all we valued has vanished. For us it doesn't exist anymore. What's going to happen now?"

As if in answer to their question, they suddenly sensed themselves being transported, as if through a mist of clouds, to another world. When they looked around, they found they were in a queue of people, men, women and children, of all nationalities and languages. The queue led to a big wall, the top of which went up as far as they could see.

In the wall were two doors, a narrow one on the right and a much wider one on the left. Over the narrow door there was a sign that read *To Heaven*; a similar sign over the wide door read *To Hell?* In front of the wall, between the doors, was a big table. On the table was a large Book, and behind the table was a man dressed in glowing white. Somehow they both knew he was an angel.

As people got to the head of the queue, the angel asked their names and then searched the Book. If their names were written there, the angel took a white robe from under the table and gave

it to the person. The person put the white robe on and then, shouting for joy, ran to the door on the right, which opened before them. As each one entered, James and Louise glimpsed beautiful colours inside, and heard laughter and joyful singing as if from a party.



However, if a person's name was not written in the Book, guards were called, and the person was taken, screaming and weeping, dragging their feet, to the door on the left. As that door opened, all James and Louise could see was a blackness tinged with red, and they felt a sense of dread as they looked. From within came nothing but the sounds of crying and moaning.

James and Louise began to tremble as they approached the table, and then they were at the head of the queue.

"Hello," said the Angel. "You must be James and Louise. I felt you were coming. Just a moment, I will look to see if your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life."

"The Lamb's Book of Life?" said Louise. "What's that? I've never heard of it"

"It is the book mentioned in the Bible," said the Angel. "Only those whose names are written in it are able to enter Heaven."

"Why do you have to have your name written in the Lamb's

Book of Life?" asked Louise. "Isn't God a God of love who won't reject anyone? Doesn't everyone go to Heaven?"

"No, they don't," said the Angel. "This is a time when God, as a just God, must act with justice, though tempered with love."

The Angel looked from one to the other and then went on. "For everyone their 'end times' is when they die. Once you have died, everything is set in place. You had your opportunity to get it right—or perhaps I should say, get it clean—when you were living in the world. After death it is too late.

# Chapter 3 - Why impure people cannot enter heaven

"Heaven is where God lives. God is extremely powerful—so powerful that he created the universe by just uttering a word—and he radiates an enormous amount of energy. Nobody who is impure can exist in his presence. Only those who are completely pure can come into his presence and live with him."

The Angel paused. "Perhaps an example will help you understand. If you have a burning flame that is very hot and you bring a clear, pure piece of glass near it, the heat energy from the flame will pass straight through it and the glass will be untouched. On the other hand, if you bring an impure piece of glass, such as one that has been smeared or painted, near a burning flame, the heat won't pass through the glass but will quickly heat it and the glass will distort or shatter.

"It is the same with people and God. Only people who have been made pure and whose names have been written in the Lamb's Book of Life can enter Heaven and come into the presence of God."

"What do you have to do?" asked James urgently. What do you have to do to be made pure and have your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life? I think I've tried to live a good life. I haven't deliberately hurt anyone. Is that enough?"

"It's not what you have done but whether you have chosen to receive God's gift of grace," the Angel replied.

"In the beginning, after God had finished creating the world, Adam and Eve had a close personal relationship with their Father God," he continued. "Every afternoon, when God walked in the Garden of Eden, he met with Adam and Eve and had a great talk and everything was good. 5

"God made only one condition (law) for Adam and Eve while they lived in the Garden. This was that they could eat the fruit of all the trees in the Garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God said to them, 'You must not eat the fruit of that tree or you will die.'

"But Satan, God's enemy, deceived Adam and Eve and6 they ate the fruit. They broke God's one condition—that is, they sinned. Consequently they became impure, and God had to put them out of the Garden. They lost the close personal relationship they had with God.

"This continued for many years. Adam and Eve's children numbered many generations, but their wilful disobedience towards God (their sin) continued from generation to generation.

"God tried to overcome the gap that had developed between him and man by focusing on one particular group of people, who became known as the Jews. He made a Covenant, or Agreement, with them that if they would keep his laws, he would be their God and they would be his people 7

"For the times when they broke his laws, he gave them a series of religious rituals they were to perform, which involved the killing of certain animals (the animals were to be a substitute for the people to sacrifice). The spilling of the animals' blood was required by God as payment (atonement) for the people's mistakes and to cleanse them from the stain of their sins. But," added the Angel, "this didn't work very well and had to be done over and over again.

#### Chapter 4 - God proves how much he loves us!

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"Finally God decided the time had come to make a New Covenant, firstly with his people the Jews and then with the people of all the Nations of the world. As part of this New Covenant, God would provide the ultimate substitute sacrifice and offer it as a gift to every person in the world and for each generation to come. There was only one requirement: each person had to choose either to accept the gift or to reject it, and when they died they would live in eternity with the consequences of their choice.

"To fulfil his part of the Covenant, God met with Jesus in Heaven and said to him, 'I want you, my Son, to humble yourself, to give up your heavenly rights and to enter the world in the form of a human baby. I want you to grow up and live as a man to show people what I'm like. Then, at the time I have appointed, I want you to allow yourself to be taken prisoner, be beaten, humiliated, convicted of false charges, and as a consequence be crucified by men and die.

Your death and the spilling of your blood will be the once and for all substitute sacrifice for the sins of every person in the whole world and for all the generations to come. By allowing yourself to be persecuted and suffer, you will show all people that you understand their suffering, as only one who has suffered can.

You will remain dead until the third day and then I will show my supreme power over death by bringing you back to life on earth. After that you will return to me in Heaven.'

"Jesus was obedient to his Father. His Father's Spirit 'overshadowed' a virgin called Mary, who became pregnant and had a baby. He grew into a man. He began his ministry by teaching, miraculously healing the blind and disabled, and raising people from the dead. At God's appointed time, he was betrayed, unlawfully convicted and crucified. He died and was buried



"But on the third day he rose to life again. Then he ascended into Heaven. <sup>9</sup> And with that," the Angel explained, "God's part of the New Covenant was in place."

The Angel was silent for a moment, watching them. "Now," he said finally, "the situation is this. Everyone has, by their human nature, broken God's laws and become impure. This 10 creates an impossible barrier to entering Heaven for every man and woman, because no one who is impure can come into the presence of God. And no one can cleanse themselves either by doing good works, paying lots of money or anything else.

"God says, 'I care for every person very much. I want them to come into my presence. But while they are impure, that is impossible. I have provided a way for them to become pure, but it is up to each individual man and woman to choose how to respond."

#### Chapter 5 - Why we have to choose?

"Why did God say that each person has to choose how they respond to what he did through Jesus?" asked James.

"Well," said the Angel, "when God created Adam and Eve, he wanted to have a personal relationship with them, and to do so he had to give them free will. The only way to have a meaningful relationship with someone is for them to have the free will to either be part of that relationship or reject it. It is like the difference in the relationship a person can have with a doll and a baby. A doll cannot respond in any way while a baby

responds with smiles and chuckles, and as it gets older he or she can have a relationship of equals with the person.

"To emphasise how important it is to God to have a relationship with people," the Angel continued, "God made a huge, unique promise to those who make the decision to follow Jesus. God freely guarantees to forgive a person's sins 11 and to make the person his adopted son or daughter. 12

"This promise is part of a spiritual battle that is going on in the world between God and his enemy, Satan. This battle is for the mind and soul of each individual person. The ruler of the world at present is Satan, and his aim is to wreck everyone's life and stop them from going to Heaven. Most of the bad things that happen in the world are caused directly by him or by people under his infuence, and he wants people to blame God for either causing or allowing those bad things to happen. When people get angry and blame God for what is happening in the world, then naturally they reject God and his gift. They lose, God loses and Satan wins. As God has given people freewill, he cannot intervene and stop everything bad happening. For him to do so would be to take away people's ability to make choices, even people choosing to do terrible things.

"So to get back to the need to choose, God has provided the substitute sacrifice required for the cleansing of sins, and he offers it to each individual person in the world as a gift. But he won't force them to accept it. To accept it they have to repent of their sins (that is, be sorry for and turn away from them ), and to say with their mouths that Jesus is Lord and believe in their hearts that he died on the cross and God raised him from the dead. 14



"On making this declaration they fulfl their part of the Covenant—like shaking hands on a 'spiritual' contract—and their names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

"Now the relationship between God and the people he created has been restored. They can talk to him (pray) whenever they want, and he can speak to them through his instruction book (the Bible), revealing to them his purpose for their life and giving them hope for the future. One unusual difference in a relationship with God is that the more a person does or gives to others in his name, the more they feel blessed by him.

"It doesn't mean that life suddenly becomes easy with no troubles. In fact, it may have more troubles and become more difficult, as Satan tries to break up the relationship, just as he did with Adam and Eve. Most importantly, however, God through Jesus has promised never to leave alone a person who has made a Covenant with him, and he will never allow them to have more troubles than they can cope with. If the Covenant has been sincerely made and a person continually follows Jesus' teaching <sup>15</sup> it cannot be broken. When people 'mess up' and make mistakes, they can talk to God, say 'sorry about that' and seek his guidance, knowing that his forgiveness is unlimited and he is eager to help them as they walk with him.

"When they die, they come to the Gates of Heaven and Hell, and their names are checked to make sure they are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Then they are given a 'robe of righteousness', <sup>16</sup> which signifies that they have been made pure so they can be in the presence of God and can enter Heaven.

"If, on the other hand, a person has chosen not to believe and to reject God's gift, or they have drifted or walked away from their faith in Jesus as their Saviour and their name has been erased, then naturally their name will not be written in the Lamb's Book of Life<sup>17</sup>. Then when they die and come to the Gates of Heaven and Hell, they won't be able to get the robe of righteousness and they won't be able to enter Heaven because of the presence of God."

## Chapter 6 - James and Louise' tragic mistake

"What is our situation?" Chorused James and Louise anxiously.

"Unfortunately," said the Angel, looking down at the Book once again, "neither of you has chosen to accept Jesus as your Saviour. Hence your names are not written in the Lamb's Book of Life, you are impure and there is no way you can enter Heaven."

"But that's not fair!" protested Louise, "No one told me that I might go to Hell when I died!"

"Yes" said the Angel "You are right. The modern Christian Church has been tricked by Satan, and no longer tells people about Hell, because they want to present a warm, fuzzy message that will not frighten people and that they will easily accept. They don't realise that it is a contradiction to their most important message. They say Jesus is the Saviour of the world, but he can only save people if he has something to save them from. The only thing Jesus died for, was to offer people the opportunity to be reconciled to God and to be saved from going to Hell!"

"But being fair is not the point!" said the Angel. "It is being just!" God has offered forgiveness as his part of the Covenant to all who will receive it as a gift. Even people who have committed terrible crimes, if they are sorry for their mistakes and receive Christ, they are forgiven by God and given a fresh start. Even those who repent on their deathbed are saved.

"But just as Satan deceived Adam and Eve those many years ago, he and those who have believed his lies still whisper, write and broadcast into the ears of people many lies. Lies such as, 'believe the theory of evolution—there is no God', 'the Bible is the fiction of men', 'you are your own God', 'enjoy life while you can', 'don't worry about the future, death is a long way off'. His final deception is to encourage people to take the path of suicide or euthanasia—they believe they are avoiding pain and indignity, but Satan is robbing them of their last chance to meet and choose to follow Jesus.

"The result of Satan telling people lies," 19 said the Angel, "is

that the people are tricked—they don't see a need to search for the truth and they miss out on an opportunity to make a decision to be a follower of Jesus and to spend eternity in Heaven. Then by default their choice is not to have their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

"James and Louise," said the Angel, with tears in his eyes and sadness in his voice, "that is your situation. You have not chosen to receive God's gift; your names are not written in the Lamb's Book of Life; you remain impure. You cannot enter Heaven." With a final shake of his head, the Angel called, "Guards! Escort these two to the door into Hell."

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#### Chapter 7 - What have YOU chosen?

This is what happened to James and Louise.

You, the reader, however, are fortunately not in the position of James and Louise looking down on their lifeless bodies, even though you may have come close to it in the past. But the question you do have to face up to is this: *What have I chosen?*"

The life your decision will effect is yours, both now and for all eternity to come. So don't waste any more time—get serious. You don't know how much time you have left.

God says in his letter to us, the Bible, that each one of us is an astonishing, intricately created individual, extremely precious to him. (Stop and think about that if you feel that no one else loves you. God, the Creator of the universe, loves you!) So precious to him are you that he sent Jesus to die, so that *you*, like everyone else, now have the choice to be freed from the sentence of your sins.

Will you just waste the time you have left in this world in a meaningless existence? Or will you use it to find out the purpose of your life and live it to the full with Jesus' help?

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Jesus wants to have a relationship with you as your closest friend. In Revelation 3:20 he says, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."

If you want to open your life to Jesus, to walk with him now and enter the gate of Heaven into eternal life, pray the following prayer: "Dear God, I know that I'm a sinner, I am sorry for my sins and I ask your forgiveness. Thank you for sending Jesus to die for my sins upon the cross. Thank you that he rose again and defeated death. I receive your forgiveness and ask you to be my personal friend and Saviour."

If you have prayed this prayer sincerely, please know that your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life and God has adopted you as his child.

I encourage you to contact someone and tell them of your decision. Then obtain a copy of the Bible and read some of it each day — the book of Luke in the New Testament is a good place to start. Prayerfully seek a local church or Christian fellowship group that will assist you in growing as a new Christian by the clear teaching of the Bible. Most importantly learn and follow Jesus' teaching and do not risk losing God's gift, by treating it casually or being seduced by the temptations of the world.

#### Endnotes

All Bible quotations are taken from *The Holy Bible, New International Version* □. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House.

- 1 Psalm 14:1 The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."
- 2 Matthew 7:13 Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.
- 3 Revelation 21:27 Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life
- 4 Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.
- 5 Genesis 1:31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.
- 6 Genesis 3:1-7 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"
  - The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' "'You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.
- 7 Exodus 19:5–6 Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.
- 8 John chapters 18 and 19.
- 9 The New Testament book of Luke.
- 10 Romans 3:23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

  John 3:5 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.
- 11 Luke 5:20 When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."
- 12 John 1:12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.
- 13 John 8:11 "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

- 14 Romans 10:9–10 If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justifed, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.
- 15 Luke 8: 11-15 11"This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. 12Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. 13Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. 14The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. 15But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.
- 16 Revelation 7:13-14 Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?" I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."
- 17 Revelation 3: 5 He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.
- 18 Luke 23:39–43 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."
- 19 John 8:44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.
- 20 2 Thessalonians 1:8–9 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power.
- 21 John 3: 16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.
- 22 John 10:10 Jesus said, "The thief [Satan] comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

They were a typical, modern, young couple,
full of vitality, tolerant, with ambitions to have
the best that life could offer.

If they were to die, (well it would happen someday)
they assumed they would go to Heaven.

But all their life, they had been deceived! It was too
late when they became aware, they had to choose

By then they had been robbed!

Read their story so that you are not robbed as they were!

This little book is very easy to read, simple in its statements, theologically accurate, and carefully sets out the alternatives. I commend this booklet as something that should be read widely and handed out to friend and foe alike!

- Barbara Wilson- New Life

