Life as we call it on this planet is very strange. There’s not a sensible person anywhere who would plan life the way it is carried out on this rock, if in fact they had a chance to plan it. Nobody would plan it this way. Whether because of pain and anguish ... or trouble. If you had your choice in the matter, you would not plan to have trouble, or pain. I don’t believe this is God’s plan; I believe it’s the byproduct of the sin problem.

We are caught up in this mess. And the pain is physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. In order to survive we have to invent escape mechanisms: if you’ve got bodily pain, you have to invent a pain pill. If you have emotional pain, you have to invent an emotional pain pill. You must find some way to blunt the reality of life, as we call it.

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"Captivity Is Coming — for Some"

By Charles Wheeling

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It's interesting to me that if you go to China, and you see a mother with her dead baby lying by her side, the mother is crying. Same thing if you go to Africa. If you come to America and see the same scene, the mother is crying. It appears that we all share the same sensitivity to pain. We all have different ways of dealing with it, different escape mechanisms.

Religion is a wonderful way for many to get a handle on the emotional and spiritual pain of life: "My child is not dead; she's gone to heaven." Ask the question: "Is she going to remain a child until you get there?" "Will she remain a child forever?" These are the questions that should be asked. But those kinds of questions are not asked or pursued. If the dead child has gone to heaven, why are the mothers crying? Pain does not cause rational thinking. Pain itself is unreasonable, therefore the escapes that we invent are unreasonable. And that seems to make it okay for us to invent unreasonable escape mechanisms.

Even as a youth in the Baptist faith I had problems with the idea that, "If it's the will of God that the tree falls on you, then it's the will of God — the tree's going to fall on you." I have problems with that kind of thinking. In other words, nothing can happen to you, or will happen to you, except it's the will of God.

Christianity did not have a choice as to when it would be born. Obviously it could not be born before Jesus came as a man, and when Jesus did come as a man, Christianity was born. Christianity was a burr under the saddle of Judaism. Christianity was a pain, and a way had to be found of dealing with the pain. Jesus was a pain to their thinking; He was a pain to their theology. He was a pain! Even though He was doing wonderful things, it was those deeply spiritual, theological issues that mattered most to the religious leaders. And they do matter most. That's why Jesus was paining them … because they were incorrect. But being incorrect is painful … so we can't be incorrect. We've got to get rid of Him who is the source of the pain. "It's better that one man should die, than that we all should perish." That's reasonable thinking. We cannot study Jesus and His activities and His sermons, and say He didn't know what He was doing. He knew exactly what He was doing. He knew He was stirring the pot. He knew it … but He didn't stop it. He didn't stop because 1,800 and 2,000 years of Judaism had not brought the people to a safe, sound, correct position in their thinking of God and their relationship with God.
For reasons that I attribute to Heaven as much to the people of Jesus' day, they came to the conclusion that works were salvation. If you keep every point of the Law, then you’re going to Heaven. Jesus brought that point up with the rich young ruler, who asked Jesus,

“What can I do?”

“You know the Law.”

“I’ve kept all that!”

And I don’t even question the veracity of that claim.

“I’ve done all that!”

Jesus responded to the rich, young ruler that the works of the Law — necessary and good as they may be — do not save your soul. This is an enigma; it’s a problem that doesn’t make sense. If I do a bad work, I can be lost; but if I do a good work, I can’t be saved. That’s not reasonable, and the entire human family sees that it’s unreasonable … so they ignore it. Almost the entire human family who expect to be saved, practice a form of works for salvation.

As far as the people were concerned, Christianity was born at an "inconvenient time." But the Scripture says it was in the “fullness of time” that God sent Jesus. It was inconvenient because of the Romans, and it was inconvenient because of the Jews. But Christianity was born when God wanted it to be born. Christianity, as an expansion of Judaism, was inconvenient for the people. And if it was inconvenient for the people, it was inconvenient for God.

Jesus invited people to follow Him, to be His disciples. The word disciple is where the word discipline comes from. In other words, we’ve got to discipline ourselves. What is it about us that has to be disciplined? We’ve got to put away sin in our lives. We must discipline ourselves to endure pain and trial. Pain and trial? That's a different story. My whole object in life is often to avoid pain. That's the sermon Jesus is not preaching. He doesn’t say, “If you follow me you'll avoid pain.” Far from it; He says, “If you follow Me you can expect pain.”

Within 30 to 60 years of Jesus, Peter, James and Paul there were thousands of Christians. Christianity was spreading. And just like Christianity within Judaism was not appreciated, Christianity within Romanism was despised. Within a few brief years of Paul's beheading and Peter's crucifixion thousands of Christians are thrown to the lions. Whole families: husbands and wives with their children were thrown to the lions, to the applause, laughter and glee of countless thousands in the bleachers of the arenas. There were millions of Christians back then, today and everywhere in between, who believe it was the will of God for those people to be thrown to the lions. “God wills it,” say the Christians. “Allah wills it,” say the Muslims. And I don’t buy it, not in the Baptist Church, not in the Adventist church, and I don’t buy it in the history books. I simply don’t buy it. I think they were in the wrong place at the wrong time. Can it surely be that simple? It's that simple. People cannot choose where they are to be born, when they are going to live. We cannot choose the circumstances that are going to surround us when we are to be born. We’re just here.

“Well, it's the will of God!”

Honestly, I don't believe that. I don't believe the circumstances that haunt you and me down here were ever the will of God — ever. I think that we are in the wrong place at the wrong time. You can reason positively and say, “No, we’re here at the right time.” And you’re free to think that way if you choose.

Let’s consider Scripture:
Revelation 13, verse 9 counsels us that if any man have an ear he’d better listen up. Somebody is calling someone’s attention to something. “If any man have an ear, let him hear. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity.” Think of this in the context of Revelation 13: the Mark of the Beast … you can’t fight city hall. Who’s going to lead into captivity? The Beast System … the Little Horn … the Woman — all of them conspiring together to get rid of you, me and anybody that doesn’t go along with the plan. If you and I are there when that happens we’ll be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Look at the phrase again: “He that leadeth into captivity ….” — that’s an action taking place — “shall go into captivity ….” — that’s an action yet to take place. While he’s leading into captivity folks are being burned at the stake; their houses are torched while they and their families are sleeping at night; they’re rounded up and beheaded publicly.

“This is the will of God!”

I don’t believe that at all. They are simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. But ask the question: does God have any responsibility in this matter? Expand the question: were warnings given through Jesus Himself to the early Christian church that when you see Jerusalem surrounded with armies … Run!? Why didn’t He tell them it’s the will of God that you stand there and be brave, and make a demonstration? He didn’t say that at all, did He? He told them to run for it … don’t even go get your umbrella or your coat — run!

If you read the Gospels carefully you will see that Jesus was brought to the point several times in His ministry where His life was threatened … prematurely. We know He was here to die, but not before the time. Do you and I have a time to die? If you’re a Baptist, then, yes, you’ve got a time to die. This view paints a very ugly picture of God, wouldn’t you say? God is pictured in Heaven making the declaration that you will live till this hour, this minute, this day, and then you’re going to get it. I honestly pray that this is not a true picture of God at all.

Let’s look again:

“He that leadeth into captivity ‘shall’ go ….” “shall” is future tense. In other words, someone is going into captivity, before the “captivator” goes into captivity. “He that killeth with the sword … must be killed with the sword.” There’s a time coming when somebody is going to be killed with the sword … before the killer with the sword is killed.

“Here is the patience and faith of the saints.”

If you get caught in the big cities, and the cordon is put up, and you can’t get out, then you’d better have the patience and faith of the saints … that's all I have to say; Because you did not understand that it was not the will of God for you to stay there.

You can say all you want: “God will take care of me!”

If there is any such thing as luck, well … good luck.

If you’re going to avoid the trouble that is on the way, you’re going to have to make difficult, painful decisions — before the fact … not when the fact arrives. That upsets families. That upsets paychecks. That upsets kids. “My friends are here,” we say. Yes, it’s painful. But do you want a little pain now … or a whole lot of pain later? We’re all going to experience pain down here; but reasonably, sensibly, logically, we should avoid as much pain as possible, as often as possible; and the “as possible” is important.

All these mature leaders in Islam tell all these other young folks to blow themselves up. Why don’t these Islamic elders blow themselves up first? They’ll tell you it’s important that they stay here and tell everyone else to blow themselves up. None of this makes any sense. Life here makes no sense. The human condition here makes no
sense. It makes no sense because it is not God's plan. I believe God works through it and around it; but this was never God's plan. Just like you and I have to work around it, God is having to work around it. I might live 70 or 80 years and have to put up with it. But, unfortunately, God has to put up with it far longer than that. I'm trying to look at this mess, not just through human eyes, but through Heaven's eyes, and see that this was never God's plan.

Listen to it again:

“If any man have an ear, let him hear. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and faith of the saints.”

I believe — if we can know the danger ahead of time — that it is the will of God that we get out of Dodge. I don't believe God is glorified because we throw ourselves to the lions. I believe there is a practical side to religion and spirituality. If I can live longer, I think I should. I believe that is how we were created … to want to live, and not want to die.

So, what do we do with Revelation 12:11:

“And they loved not their lives unto to the death”?

This verse is speaking of people like the disciples — maybe like us — who are caught by the circumstances of the day. They are going to have the patience and faith of the saints. All they can conclude is that God knows where they are, and if he wants them to be saved out of it, He will save them. That's the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and Daniel in the lions' den. Daniel didn't go out of his way to make sure the shades were up while he was saying his prayers; he wasn't sure to pray loud enough that he could be heard all through the house. He had no intention of being thrown into the lions' den. I don't believe the three worthies told each other to stand up, so we can burn up. I believe time and circumstance caught up with them, and they couldn't run anywhere.

We're coming to the end of the world. But is it because God has said, “I have declared that there shall be no more time”? Or is it because of time and circumstance, and because the powers of heaven are shaking, and because it's payday? Judgment Day? It is the end of the rock; and since we live on the rock and we’re part of the rock, we’re going to get caught up in whatever is coming.

I have come to believe and understand, that the Bible is written by human beings who believe God sent the flood, and that there could not be a flood unless God made it happen. I personally believe that if sin had not flooded the planet before the flood of water, and all the circumstances were pointing to the flood coming, I believe God could have spoken and moved whatever out of the way and prevented the Great Deluge; the same way He spoke to the clouds and the waves, and told them to stop … be still and go away. God is caught up in this chain of circumstances as well, though not of His own making; someone else is making and doing. And here we are caught in this trap. We, too, are in this prison.

By the way, had God stopped the flood that drowned the world in Noah's day, the intelligent universe would not have seen what sin produces … what the byproducts of sin are … and what the end result of sin is. Evidently there's an end product of sin that the world has not yet seen. Daniel 12:1 is all about a time of trouble such as never was. There's something coming on this rock that nobody, in all the centuries and millennia before us, has ever seen.

If you're watching the news; if you're reading the news; if you know anything about recorded history, or about present history being written, you would have to be blind to not see that a storm is coming relentless in its fury. Ellen White spoke of a dream she had; she said she looked around the morning after a storm had gone through in the night, and everything had been swept away. There was nothing left.
You don't have a while to think about this. Your while time is over. What these verses are saying to you is “Do or die;” when this time comes don't be in the way, because it's going to happen; It's coming — quickly.

Amen, and Amen ....