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# 29 Questions about *War of the Worlds*

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## War Of The Worlds Bible Study

### A Word Before:

Don't do these questions in sequential order and please don't feel like you have to use all of them...It could take way too much time! It's our hope that you'll pick out the 5-6 questions that will benefit your group, figure out where you want to go and use these questions as a springboard. This is a freebie, so use it and pass it on—Just tell everyone where you got it...

### Optional Activity:

In 1938 a man named Orson Wells created a production of War of The Worlds as a radio drama. To get a realistic feel for the production, Wells played it as if it were a news bulletin. Thousands of people, those who were not listening to Charlie McCarthy (ask your grandparents about that one) believed the earth was under attack. Some left their homes. Some went out hunting. There's a story that a man in Grover's Mills, Pennsylvania took a shot at the local water tower thinking it to be an alien spacecraft. Contrary to popular belief no one died or was killed as a result of the broadcast. Reporters began making reports up after Orson Wells seemed to think it was funny that so many people were fooled.

To create the sound of the alien spacecraft opening (on live radio) Wells ran a microphone to a nearby men's room and placed the mike in a toilet. At a given signal a stagehand slowly unscrewed a mason jar in the bowl. Laugh if you want...the effect was highly believable. As an activity send your youth into the church armed with tape recorders and have them create their own science fiction type sound effect. Be sure they don't tell anyone what they actually did for the sound until afterward.

### Optional:

Look online for a cool picture of the earth from space. Print this out in coaster sized copies and be ready to hand these out to your students. If you can't print out enough for everyone, print out just one to use as a visual aid.

### Scripture:

Genesis 9:18-17

Psalms 78

Romans 8:28-39

1 Corinthians 13:13

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## The Questions:

Start off by reading the actual introduction to the novel War Of The Worlds. Don't tell the group right away that's what you are doing.

*No one would have believed in the last years of the nineteenth century that this world was being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man's and yet as mortal as his own; that as men busied themselves about their various concerns they were scrutinized and studied, perhaps almost as narrowly as a man with a microscope might scrutinize the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water. With infinite complacency men went to and fro over this globe about their little affairs, serene in their assurance of their empire over matter. It is possible that the infusoria under the microscope do the same. No one gave a thought to the older worlds of space as sources of human danger, or thought of them only to dismiss the idea of life upon them as impossible or improbable.*

After you read the passage from the book tell the group that the work was written in 1898. If you simply switch the word nineteenth to twenty-first the passage is completely relevant.

**QUESTION 1:** How does it make you feel that the same words can apply so accurately to our lives today? How are we too caught up in the “various concerns” of our lives? Give a few examples.

Read Psalm 78

**QUESTION 2:** How does this Psalm make you think of the story in War of the Worlds?

**QUESTION 3:** This movie differs from other alien invasion movies in that it does not focus on the great battle. It zeros in on one dysfunctional family and how they cope with the crisis. Tom Cruise is not the sly smirking hero he often plays. At the beginning of the film he's a pretty lousy dad. How many families do you know who are the classic Dad-Mom-Kids-Puppy picture? What was the biggest crisis your family has ever gone through? How did you survive? How does crisis change us?

**QUESTION 4:** In many ways Ray's children are the grown-ups and he is the child. How does that change by the time we reach the end of the story? How have your parents changed since you were small?

**QUESTION 5:** Stephen Spielberg made a little film called ET: The Extra-Terrestrial a few years back. How are these two films different? What does it say about who we were then and who we are now?

Spielberg also made Close Encounters Of The Third Kind. The first time we hear the alien ship in that movie sounds a lot like the “blast” we hear from the ship in War of the Worlds. Again, what does this say about who we were then and who we are now? What does it take to get your attention?

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**QUESTION 6:** In the Bible the word Rachel (The little girl's name) means "ewe" or "girl sheep". Do you think there is any significance there? How about when Ray leaves all the others to go back after the one "lost sheep".

**QUESTION 7:** Who is the most Christ-like character in the movie?

**QUESTION 8:** There are several scenes in the movie that seem to recall September 11<sup>th</sup>. (The wall covered in pictures of the missing. The flags hanging from the row houses.) It is a seemingly ordinary day and suddenly everything is changed forever. We watch the destruction of the neighborhood the same way we watched the towers fall.

How has life changed for the characters in the story? How has life changed for the world? How has your life changed since September 11<sup>th</sup>?

**QUESTION 9:** Could you die for someone you loved?

**QUESTION 10:** Could you let someone else die to save your family? (Ray let the bridge of the ferry close trapping the woman he knew on the outside).

**QUESTION 11:** In the original story written by H.G. Wells, Tim Robbins' character invites Ray to stay and help dig a tunnel and start a new world underground in the subways and sewers. Ray leaves him alone to dig his tunnel. Why do you think the filmmakers made the change? What did it add to the story this way? Could you do what Ray did to save his family?

**QUESTION 12:** Ray had to make a choice to let his son go and save his daughter from the well-meaning couple who tried to take her with them. Why do you think it's so hard for parents to "let go?" How hard would it be to let your son or daughter go off to fight in a war? Do you think Ray could have let Robbie go if he had not seen him rescue the people on the boat? Why do you think Ray looked so amazed at his son's action on the ferry?

**QUESTION 13:** In that scene, who are you most like right now in life? Explain your answer:

Ray

Robbie

Rachel

The well-meaning couple

**QUESTION 14:** Tim Robbins' character says "The ones who survive are the ones who keep their eyes open." The ones who keep their heads are the ones who survive? Do you think this is true? Do you think it was true for him?

**QUESTION 15:** The only lullaby that Ray knows is the Beach Boys song Little Duce Coupe (a duce coupe is a really hot car). The song includes the line "If she had a set of wings, man, I know she could fly."

Rachel sings the song Hush-a-Bye Mountain. This song was in the movie Chitty Chitty Bang

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Bang another story about a flying car.

Why do you think the filmmakers used these two references? Ray and Rachel may not be as far apart as we originally think. What are some ways that you are like your mother or father? Has it ever been pointed out to you “You’re just like your dad/mom?” Talk about that--

**QUESTION 16:** Rachel has a splinter in her finger and she refuses to let Ray take it out. She says her body will push it out when it’s ready? How does this little scene play out in the grand scheme of the story?

**QUESTION 17:** In the movie people seemed to be heading toward the church without thinking about it. Why do you think so many people wait until things hit rock bottom before finally turning to God for help?

**QUESTION 18:** Why do you think the filmmakers made a point of wrecking the church building? They could have used a supermarket or a school but they chose a church.

**QUESTION 19:** One of Ray’s friends says, “God’s pissed off.” Do you think that was true? Do you think God gets “angry” and takes it out on everyone?

**QUESTION 20:** There were some comments made a few years back that the hurricanes that destroyed so much of Florida were sent by God to punish people for their behavior. Do you think that was true? Do you think God would send aliens to “teach us a lesson?”

**QUESTION 21:** Do you think God “allowed” the aliens to destroy so much of the world? Do you think God “allows” bad things to happen to us?

**QUESTION 22:** There’s an old children’s lesson about God, it says He made the rose and the devil made the thorns. Do you think this is true? We have a tendency to blame all the bad things in our world on “Satan”.

Read Romans 8:28-39

The scriptures tell us that God does not cause bad things to happen but takes ALL THINGS both good and bad and makes them work together for his purposes.

**QUESTION 23:** Does verse 36 sound like Tim Robbins’s speech about “This is not an invasion. This is an extermination.” What is the scriptures answer to that notion?

**QUESTION 24:** Read 1 Corinthians 13:13

Give an example of Faith in the movie.

Give an example of Hope in the movie.

Give an example of Love in the movie.

**QUESTION 25:** In the final scene of the movie Ray does not run lovingly into the arms of his ex-wife. He stands far away. Talk about what you think happens to the family in the next ten minutes after the camera faded to black. What happened in the next ten days? Ten

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years?

**QUESTION 26:** God was angry once and destroyed the earth by flooding it, except for one family and some animals, but He promised he would never do that again. (Genesis 6-8) How do you think God feels when he looks down now?

If you have the pictures of the earth, pass them out now.

**QUESTION 27** People in Noah's time could not have conceived that they could see the earth like this, but to us it's commonplace. From this distance the aliens could not have conceived the problems they would run into. From this distance you wouldn't know the problems we face. Read Genesis 9:8-17. God's message after the destruction of the world is not one of condemnation but one of hope. How could you apply this verse to the final moments of the movie War of the Worlds?

**QUESTION 28** What do you think the narrator means when he says "Man does not live or die in vain." Is it true? If it is, what are the broader implications of that idea?

**QUESTION 29:** The scene in which Ray opens the door to the world covered in the red weed is eerily like The Wizard of Oz. The camera sits behind the shoulder of the character opening the door and we see out the gray house into a world of bizarre color. What do you think the filmmakers were trying to say, if anything, with this?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE:

The final narration says that man has "earned" his place, that it was "God's wisdom." In the story, Ray is told that the aliens were already here. That the machines had to be in place millions of years ago, yet God was in place long before that and created a system that allowed man to grow and adapt and "earn" his place here. We adapt as humans. We will survive. We will continue. We believe in a God made of love and love hopes all things, believes all things and endures all things.

Pray with me:

God, there are challenges coming our way that we can't even see yet. We cannot prepare for them. We just have to be ready when they hit us. Don't leave us, God. We don't ask you to solve all our problems for us but we do ask you to be with us as we face them. Give us hope. Give us faith. Give us love. Amen.

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