

WD April 29, 2024

“The War of the Worlds”

Most of us who are watching this today have probably seen or at least heard about the Movie, the War of the Worlds. Originally written all the way back in 1897 the latest Hollywood version, starring Tom Cruise, came out in 2005. The movie suggests aliens left behind war machines buried deep in the ground many years before civilization. They return with the intention of taking over the world. Their machines come out of the ground and begin chasing the startled, frightened citizens of Tom Cruise’s neighborhood, laser beaming everything from people to stuff. Thankfully Tom is a fast runner and manages to escape the carnage. Later in the movie, just when we think the aliens are winning, the aliens begin to die because of their exposure to normal bacteria found in the elements, like water. The pesky aliens with their super killer walking machines have no resistance to the bacteria that human beings had built a natural resistance to. Yea, humanity wins, and the world is saved.

Now let’s put a twist on our story. The world is tainted not just with bacteria but with sin. Sin eventually kills everything and everyone it touches. The enemy isn’t the alien but the natives, namely, “those of the world.” What we quickly discover in scripture is that God’s people are the aliens who are treated as a threat by the enemies of God because of their Christian faith. James 4:4 for example says, “You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.” And there you have it, the Christian version of The War of the Worlds.

The reason is founded in the unbeliever’s heart who makes himself a friend of the world, who loves the riches and power of this world, who’s God is the stomach and who always chases his worldview at the expense of his neighbor. They often create a world of their own and try to force others to embrace it. The Pharisees lived in their own world of ideas and stubborn thinking so much so that they missed the kingdom of God in Jesus. Their worldview was very limited by their spiritual blindness. Thus, they war against God and His people.

So, today is a reminder. Our hope today is to distinguish which world we are part of and why all ‘worlds’ are different from God’s kingdom. First, what do we hear about the war of the worlds in scripture? Christian Pastor and speaker, Voddie Baucham routinely speaks of the different worlds mentioned in scripture. We’ve probably noticed them ourselves but perhaps haven’t given the subject a lot of attention. So, let’s consider the different worlds around us.

One is the world in terms of people. “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through Him.” This is the first world, and it includes us as well as all humanity. Jesus’ love led to the cross. Jesus didn’t die on the cross for rocks or animals but for human beings. So, God gave His Son for us. This single verse is said to capture the Gospel of Jesus itself—“The Gospel in a nutshell.”

Another example of the ‘world’ is the creation of the world. Psalm 24:1—“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.” Psalm 90:2 also says, “Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.” Not only is the world a part of the creation but God gets the credit. (Consider Job 38 for example.)

On a small level the ‘world’ can also refer to a specific region. Probably most familiar to us is Luke 2:1 “In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.” The Roman world was its sovereign territory; everything under the jurisdiction of Caesar and the authority of Rome.

The ‘world’ also is a fallen place that we have no business being part of. Seems like a contradiction but when you read the passages in context the idea of the world is the fallen nature of things. For example, in Romans 12:2 Christians are being warned. “Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” John 15:19 Jesus tell His disciples, “If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.” The world in this case is referring to its fallen state, its brokenness, and rebellion against God. Because of its fallen state the world will not last and those who cling to their sin condemn themselves

with it. Matthew 18:7 Jesus says, “Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come!” The rebellion of the fallen world takes its ultimate shape in John 1:10 which tells us, “He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.” The world here refers to the creation but in the fallen state the people in it, especially His own kinsman, the Israelites, did not recognize Jesus.

Therefore, Jesus prays in John 17 in His high priestly prayer is that His followers overcome the world with Jesus and instead are unified with Jesus and the Heavenly Father. Verse 14 Jesus prays, “I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.” This verse confirms that we are aliens on our home planet. This world in its current form is not something to conform to but a place to overcome in Jesus. In the meantime, we should seem alien in our faith to look and sound different than the unbeliever in this world. We are the salt and light of this world of darkness.

Back in High School, long ago in a land far away from New Albany, Indiana a younger version of me had a classmate that came to our country from Australia. When he came in 9th grade, Anthony had a very thick down under accent. In the early days of getting to know him most of us who got to know him had to ask him to repeat himself so we could understand what he said. He was, of course, an instant hit because who doesn't like a great accent. Our English friend from here in our congregation still has her accent and it remains quite strong even though she has been in the U. S. for most of her life now. However, our friend Anthony, by the time we graduated from High School nearly lost most of his. In the same way, Christians have accents that we gain by knowing Jesus. We begin to sound like Jesus and live like Jesus in the way we do things in this world which should be a contrast to the world around us. It's like the English having tea in the afternoon. Hang around a British person long enough and one will most likely be having tea and learn to enjoy it.

The goal is not to conform to this world but to be transformed for the Kingdom to come. The Kingdom to come centers itself on Jesus and away from self-interests and self-focus. It centers on love. And that love is centered not in the world but on Jesus who is not of this world. It is this love that distinguishes the world from God's kingdom and God's people from lovers of this world.

And what happens to the world in its current form? It is remade for the believers. Isaiah 65:17 speaks of a new heaven and new earth. “See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.” The old world will be forgotten and replaced. So, those who are tethered to the old world will be lost with it. Those who are connected to Jesus will find themselves with Him in His new Kingdom.

So, the next time you read passages that speak of the world consider the context of which you are reading. Which world is it speaking about? The creation? The People? A Region? Or is it all the stuff that we as Christians are meant to overcome. Or is it the unbeliever we are to witness to in order for more of the world's residents to escape with us in Jesus? It is a war of the worlds and we are a part of it.

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John 3:30