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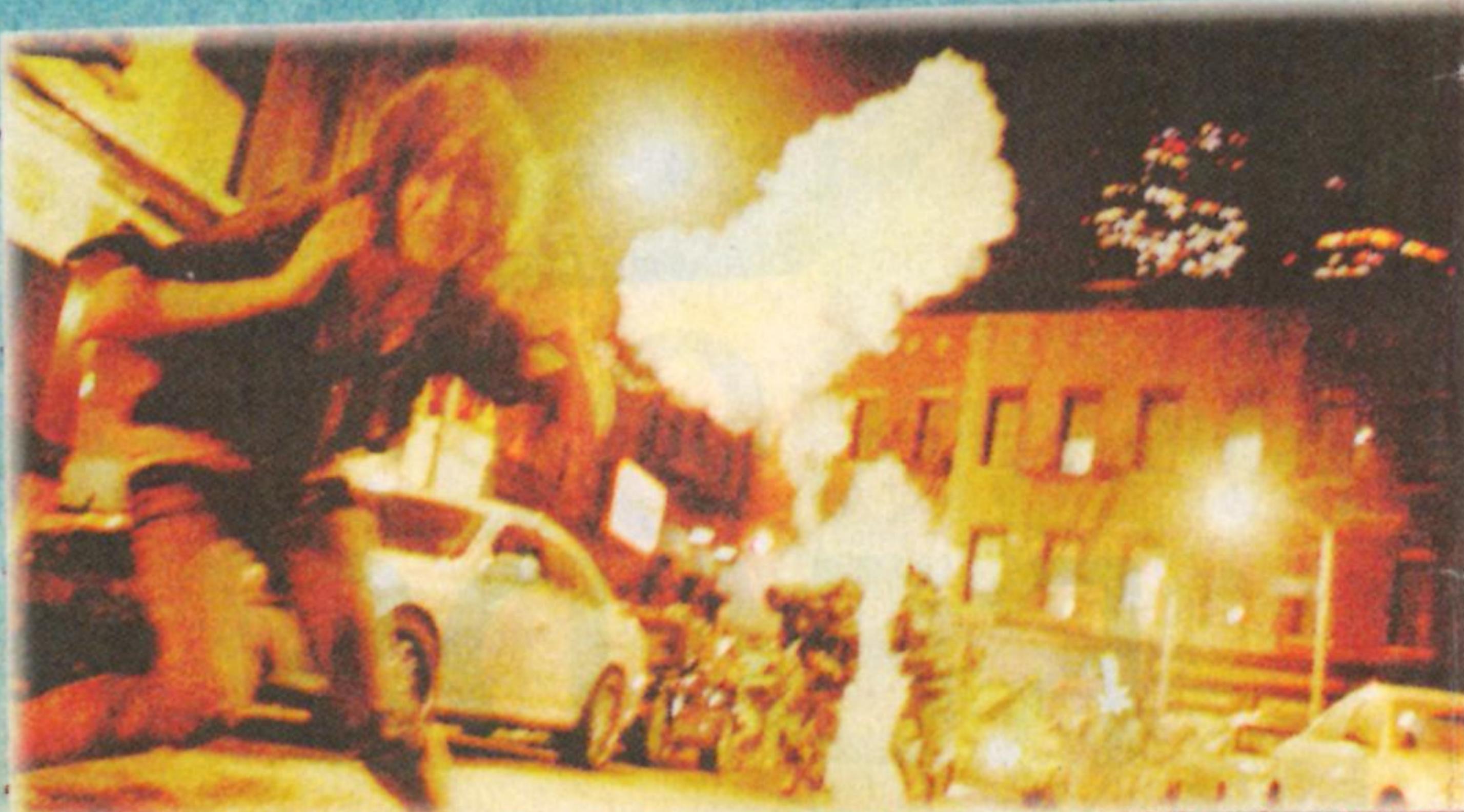
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THE BIBLE SAYS THE WORLD WILL END AND IT WON'T BE PRETTY—BUT WILL IT LOOK LIKE HOLLYWOOD'S DISASTER MOVIES?

by Michelle de Carion



DOOM





WALL*E

When I saw *I Am Legend*, I left halfway through, terrified that the world could end any minute in mass chaos and carnage. OK, I'm kind of a wimp when it comes to seeing blood and destruction. But watching Will Smith face a world of devastation really shook me up. After all, the Bible says this world will end—and it apparently won't be pretty.

There's a lot of stuff in apocalyptic or disaster films like *WALL*E*, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *Left Behind*, *Independence Day*, *Doomsday*, and *Armageddon* that remind me of the last days John prophesied about in the Book of Revelation. Yes, I know the Bible never mentions flesh-eating zombies, alien invasions, or meteorites the size of Texas. And no, we don't have a clear understanding of what Revelation means or how this world might end. But still, these movies make me wonder about how we view the end of the world.

As I thought about it all, I noticed four common traits that almost all disaster movies share—and I compared them to what I know as a believer. →

GLOOM

The author's name and other names in the story have been changed.

TRAIT #1: MASS PANIC! TOTAL FEAR!

As a giant creature tromps through Manhattan in *Cloverfield*, panic and chaos overtake the city. No one knows what this thing is or what exactly is happening. Some people stand in fear—shocked by what they see. Others loot and steal. Still others run through the devastated streets looking for safety. But no one can find shelter from this monster. Innocent bystanders perish as soldiers try to kill the monster with guns and explosives. Helicopters full of survivors are swatted out of the sky. The world has been turned upside down.

This chaos in *Cloverfield* feels pretty real—partially because it's filmed like a real YouTube video. In fact, in many ways, the action feels much like 9/11. Watching the movie elicits many of that day's fears and worries. Producer J.J. Adams commented that this is one reason why we go to scary movies. "We live in a time of great fear," he said. "Having a movie about something as outlandish as a massive creature allows people to process and experience that fear in a way that is entertaining."

However, there's a point when terrifying entertainment just becomes terrifying. I did eventually finish watching *I Am Legend*, but that experience helped me see that everyone has limits when it comes to fear. And that's OK. That movie reminded me to carefully discern what I watch and remember that God doesn't give us a spirit of fear—but one of power and self-control (2 Timothy 1:7). After all, while we need to be aware of the future, fretting about it and trying to predict it doesn't help—it just makes us more fearful. In fact, Christ tells us not to worry about what will come tomorrow and beyond. He says, "Today is sufficient of its own trouble" (Matthew 6:34, NIV).

Yes, there is plenty to fear. However, if you have trusted Christ as your Savior, you have nothing to worry about. In

Psalm 91:14, God says, "I will rescue those who love me. I will protect those who trust in my name. When they call on my name I will be with them in times of trouble (NLT)."

TRAIT #2: WE FOCUS ON WHAT'S IMPORTANT

The battle between aliens and the human race isn't the only war in *War of the Worlds*. At the beginning of the film, Rachel and Robbie hate spending time with their dad, Ray. When Robbie steps out of the car for a weekend stay, he doesn't even say hello to his father—let alone an "I love you." Ray doesn't enjoy spending much time with them, either—and instead just takes a nap.

But everything changes when aliens rip apart their city. Ray doesn't take his kids for granted any longer. He risks his life to save his children. Their bickering, grudges, and resentment just are not important any longer.

When they survive the alien attack and are reunited, Robbie runs to meet Ray. This time, he simply says, "Hey, Dad" and gives him a tear-filled hug.

What if we clung to our friends and family like that every day? Christ says he is coming quickly (Revelation 22:12). Though we don't know the day or the hour, we are commanded to live like it is the day and the hour (Matthew 25:13-23). No, giant alien attack pods probably won't terrorize your neighborhood, but this is one area where disaster movies help us figure out what matters most.

TRAIT #3: WE'LL FIGURE IT OUT!

In *I Am Legend*, Will Smith's character remains in abandoned New York City to find a cure for the mutating virus that's infected almost everyone in the world. He repeatedly says, "I can fix this," and spends years in his basement lab testing everything from



Will Smith
can't fix the
broken world.
Well, not
alone.



Amid all the garbage, neglect, and destruction, there is hope for WALL*E's world.

rats to canines. He is determined to save the human race. Most doomsday films end when the enemy is defeated, the sickness is cured, and everything is peaceful again. In the movies, scientists, brave heroes, and gallant soldiers almost always save the day. The world doesn't really end.

While these movies communicate that humans can solve the problem, we really can't. Sure, Satan will be beaten. The sickness of sin will be abolished. Peace will reign forever. But it won't be because of us. It will be because of God. Humans can't do anything to save themselves.

God alone determines the future. We can try our hardest to stop bad things from happening, to live in a way that brings God's kingdom to Earth, but ultimately we have no control. God is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end (Revelation 1:8). He has already written the story. He is, right now, fulfilling his promises and preparing a place for us (John 14:2). Christ has it already figured out.

TRAIT #4: THERE'S HOPE

Even amid the sadness and destruction, apocalyptic movies usually end by offering a glimpse of a bright future. For example, in the *City of Ember*, the underground city is dying, broken and crumbling. It's only a matter of time before the end arrives. When the entire population is gathered for a celebration, rocks tumble down and the lights go out. This is surely the end of Ember. But yet, a group of people who believe that the city's builders will return to save them begin to rejoice. While all seems to be falling apart, these believers have great hope that there's a better world awaiting them. This isn't the beginning of the end. It's a new beginning.

Likewise, if you didn't know better, *The Passion of The Christ* would also seem like a hopeless disaster movie. After all, the man who many believed was their messiah has been tortured and killed. All seems lost. Well, until we see Jesus

walk out of the tomb.

The truth is: If we only focus on the cruelties, disasters and bad news in front of us, discouragement would set in. Colossians 3:1-2 gives great advice: "Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ" (The Message). This means focusing on the promise of the kingdom of heaven—and doing our best to usher it in. For instance, we can witness to unbelieving friends, encourage other Christians, work to make this world better, and foster a strong personal relationship with our Savior.

We don't have to fear the end being near. Instead, we can trust, wait, and hope for a time when "there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in the world, and his servants shall serve him ... and they shall reign forever and ever" (Revelation 22:3-4, NIV). With Christ on our side, we have already won the battle. 

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NOW WHAT?

- Sometimes the future is scary. Read and study these verses as reminders that God is faithful to protect and save you: John 14:1-4, John 10:27-29, 1 Thessalonians 5, Psalm 91, Revelation 7:15-17, and Revelation 22.
- Many Christians avoid Revelation because it's hard to interpret. Don't be intimidated! Get a group together to study Revelation with these books at igniteyourfaith.com/go/cbd: *Encounters with God: Revelation* (Thomas Nelson), *Spirit-Filled Life Study Guide: Revelation* (Thomas Nelson) and *Revelation: The Triumph of Christ* (IVP Connect).
- What are three practical, specific ways you can bring hope and usher in the kingdom of heaven as suggested in trait 4?