



## THE CRAZIES (Cert 15)

**Overview:** Small town middle America. A plane carrying biological weapons crashes into nearby marshes infecting the water supply that turns citizens into murderous zombies which the sheriff and his doctor wife try to combat.

**Director:** Breck Eisner

**Producers:** Overture Films and Participant Media.

**Length:** 101 minutes

**Cautions:** Contains strong, bloody violence and strong language

### THE FILM

*Warning:* includes plot spoilers. Sheriff David Dutton (Timothy Olyphant) and his deputy Russell Clark (Joe Anderson) are forced into shooting and killing an armed man – the former town drunk – at a baseball game in Ogden Marsh. The pathology report indicates there were no traces of alcohol in the corpse. When a similarly behaved man sets fire to his house and family, and a submerged military plane bearing biological weapons is discovered infecting the water supply, there is general panic. More and more of the population fall victim to the behaviour-altering disease leading to outbreaks of killing. The military authorities try to contain the spread of infection by sealing off the town and slaughtering those who appear deranged. David and his pregnant doctor wife Judy (Radha Mitchell) team up with Russell and a teenage girl Becca (Danielle Panabaker) in an effort to save who they can before escaping themselves. They encounter many dangers before a reduced group of survivors reach the outskirts of another town. Ogden Marsh is 'purged' by an atomic explosion eradicating all evidence of the deaths perpetrated by disease and the army's activities. A containment order is issued after a

satellite detects that fugitives have breached the cordon around Ogden Marsh.

### FIRST REACTIONS

- This is a horror movie made at a time when several other films have end-of-the-world themes. Ask if people can think of the titles of some of these other films. In what way does this one differ?
- Over the years various films have dealt with plagues as the cause of destruction of the world as we know it. Does any of the group know *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*? There has been more than one version but what unites them is a fear of being taken over by an external evil power. What is it that we value about our present way of life that we would most hate to see removed by forces alien to us?
- In *The Stepford Wives* (both versions) the behaviour-changes in women are brought about from within that society by their very own menfolk. What might be their reasons for this?
- In *28 Days Later* as well as the original 1973 version of *The Crazies* the cause of the plague comes from outside the immediate society. But, once it is allowed admission, the citizens themselves become as destructive as those who have infected them. Who is the more responsible for the evil that follows?
- Let's assume that all these different filmmakers have among their motives a desire to warn us about something a lot less far-fetched than their stories. (For instance *Night of the Living Dead* was interpreted by some as an anti-Vietnam War movie). What, in particular, do you think *The Crazies* could be drawing our attention to in the way we have organised our world?

- The instinct for self-survival is strong in this film with heroes as well as villains. Who would you say fits into each of these categories?

### INTERACTIONS

- In Exodus chapters 7 to 11, a series of ten plagues are seen as having been sent by God harming innocent Egyptian people as well as their rulers who have refused to give the Hebrew slaves freedom to leave and find their promised land.
- Exodus interprets the plagues as a judgement on wrongdoing. In what sense could Ogden Marsh's infected water supply be seen as a judgement? And on whom?
- The Hebrews eventually settled in what became their own land in around 1,400 BC. Much later, round about 587 BC, the Babylonians dragged inhabitants of the southern kingdom of Judah into exile again. The people generally saw this as a punishment for the sins of their fathers. In contrast, the prophet Ezekiel stressed their own personal responsibility (Ezekiel 33.10–20) but also offered a vision of hope. In Chapter 37.1–14 Ezekiel pictures a valley of dry bones being transformed into living people filled with God's loving Spirit.
- Towards the end of *The Crazies*, David and Judy encounter a place heaped up with the bones of those who have been slaughtered by their fellow townsfolk or army personnel. Everything has been taken away from this community, including life itself. What hope, if any, does this film offer to them or to us who witness this atrocity? Or, bearing in mind Ezekiel's vision, what hope could be offered to the living and the dead?
- What moral reasons might the US government have in this film for secretly manufacturing biological weapons which may be banned by international law? What biblical guidance can Christians working in government or military establishments draw on in deciding whether to manufacture terrible weapons?
- One way of looking at the film is to see the way neighbours viciously turn on one another as a parallel with a 'dog eat dog' society which has lost a sense of the values which once held it together. The result is contagious and very quickly most people's humanity vanishes.
- What does the Bible teach us about creating and maintaining a good society? Key passages might include teasing out the two great commandments that Jesus pulls together (Matthew 22.37–40) and St Paul's ideas of community (e.g. 1 Corinthians 12.13; Ephesians 4.3).

### SCENE TO DISCUSS

#### **Chapters 9–10, 1hr, 4.6–1 hr, 11, 17 (approx 9 mins)**

*Sherriff Dutton, his wife Judy and his deputy, Russell, are trying to walk to an area that has not been infected by the bug. When a car approaches, they hijack it. Russell, who has been a conscientious deputy sheriff, starts acting strangely on the road of escape. The others suspect he has caught the bug.*

- Russell eventually comes to realise he is infected but he still has a choice whether he submits to its homicidal urges or does something that may salvage a bit of goodness out of a hellish situation. How did you feel about his decision?
- Jesus says (John 15.13-14) greater love has no man than this: that he lay down his life for his friends. Is there anything or anyone for whom we would do this?

- What other ways, apart from dying, can you think of which have involved you or someone you know being self-sacrificing for love of others?
- The military operation seems focused on sacrificing a whole community for the common good. What do you think of their handling of the situation?

### OTHER ANGLES TO TALK ABOUT

- Is *The Crazies* an altogether over-statement of how foul human beings can be? What are your grounds for having a higher, more optimistic view of people than this film portrays?

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