

Bible and the Headlines: Human Flood

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The Fourth of July weekend showed the Texas Hill Country the power of floodwaters. Many lives were lost and at least one person was never found. A different kind of flood happened in India this week. The tragedy is being covered by news agencies around the world even as the loss in human life is still being assessed.

One of the news agencies in this country that covered the tragedy was ABC. On September 28th, ABC.com ran, "Death Toll Climbs to 40 After Stampede at Political Rally in Southern India." The people had gathered to see a movie star campaigning for political office. The network explained the crowds behavior, "In southern Indian states, particularly Tamil Nadu, some film stars have larger than life status, rooted in the ancient Tamil culture of hero worship." This star-power has helped many thespians to succeed as politicians.

In the former Soviet Union, the Azerbaijani news portal, News.Az, on September 29th contained the story, "Death Toll from Stampede in India's Tamil Nadu Rises to 41." The article explained that a popular Indian actor-turned-politician, whose moniker is "Vijay," was supposed to make an appearance in the distant state. It notes, "Vijay was campaigning for his Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) party ahead of local elections scheduled early next year." In addition to those killed, there were over 100 people who needed medical treatment.

The day after the catastrophe the Times of India on September 29 asked, "Karur Stampede: Where is Vijay? TVK Absent at Ground Zero even as Other Parties Join in Relief Work." Commentators noted, "Neither Vijay or his functionaries visited victims or bereaved families despite his social media statement announcing compensation." The film star pledged the Indian equivalent of \$2 million to each bereaved family and \$200,000 for the injured.

There is a fatal stampede mentioned in the Bible. Its origin was a famine that occurred during the siege of Samaria (2Ki 6:24). Food became so scarce that people were eating donkey heads and pigeon droppings and paying insane prices for them (2Ki 6:25). The prophet Elisha announced to the king that God was going to end the siege and food was going to be abundant in Samaria. One of the king's officers expressed his doubts, "Even if the LORD should open the floodgates of the heavens, would such a thing be possible" (2Ki 7:2). Elisha told this sceptic, "Your eyes will see it, but you will not have a taste of the food." The next day, when the people of Samaria learned that the siege was over and the enemy had abandoned their supplies outside the city, there was a stampede. Unfortunately, the skeptical official was standing in the gateway out of the city. That was the moment Elisha's words came true, "'Your eyes will see it, but you will not have a taste of the food,' for the official was crushed to death in the gate under the feet of the people" (2Ki 7:19-20).

This narrative is a good reminder that all floods have the potential for harm whether its water, food, or people. The best advice is to "Watch and pray" (Mar 13:33).