

Coptic Christians in Egypt Continue Protests

CNN is reporting that thousands of Christian Copts in Cairo are protesting outside the offices of an Egyptian broadcaster.

Indeed, thousands of Christians, joined by many Muslims, have been staging sit-in since March 5 in front of the Egyptian TV building on the Nile Corniche in Cairo, according to the Assyrian International News Association (AINA).

What's it all about? An attack on the church in the village of Soul and the inaction of the Egyptian armed forces in preventing the Muslims from torching and demolishing the church and terrorizing the Christian Copts and forcing them to evacuate the village, AINA reports.

Military authorities running Egypt and representatives of Christian Copts demonstrating in central Cairo held talks on Thursday amid concerns over growing insecurity after deadly religious clashes, according to the AFP.

"A dialogue has started between a group of young Copts and priests with the leaders of the army, over demonstrators' claims in order to put an end to the sit-in," state television announced.

Will the talks stop the violence?

Winds of Revolution Stirring

in Burma

✖ The revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa have inspired many others to the idea of change set off by revolt.

Activists working toward social equality in Burma have taken their mission online. There, they're calling for true democracy and an end to the junta government.

While the timing could be ripe, Dyann Romeijn with Vision Beyond Borders says it wouldn't be the first time people tried revolution: "The people in Myanmar have been very repressed for a long time. There was actually a rebellion in 2007, the 'Saffron Rebellion.' It was crushed then by the ruling party, but the people probably are encouraged by the response to Mubarak being removed from office."

Not Your Ordinary Faith Message

We've all heard our fair share of faith messages. We walk by faith. We speak by faith. We live by faith. We prophesy according to our faith. We inherit the promises of God through faith (and patience). You've probably memorized all those Scriptures, too.

We've all marveled at the heroes in the Hebrews 11 "Hall of Faith." There we are edified by accounts of God's faithfulness to His people throughout the Old Testament. There we learn the practical elements of how faith works in the New Testament. Your Bible is probably colored and underlined on those pages

just like mine.

Indeed, we've all learned that faith comes by hearing the Word of God. We are convinced that acting on the Word brings results (see Rom. 10:17). We know (that we know that we know) that if we don't doubt in our heart but believe those things that we say will come to pass we will surely have whatsoever we say (see Mark 11:23). We've learned well.

Ultimately, whatever we receive from God, it comes by faith. I'm oversimplifying, but that's the anatomy of faith in a nutshell. Now what about the other side of the coin?

Hispanics Leader Opposes Obama's Marriage Directive

✖ When Sam Rodriguez speaks, evangelical Hispanics listen—and they aren't the only ones.

As president of the National Hispanic Association of Evangelicals—America's largest Hispanic Christian organization—Rodriguez has plenty of political firepower, yet he isn't known for politicizing the Gospel.

In the face of President Obama's recent Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) directive, however, Rodriguez is speaking out loudly. Passed by Congress in 1996, DOMA defines marriage as a legal union between one man and one woman for purposes of all federal laws, and provides that states need not recognize a marriage from another state if it is between persons of the same sex.

In late February, the U.S. Department of Justice and Obama are

indicating they will no longer defend a key component of the federal Defense of Marriage Act. Rodriguez has partnered with the Freedom Federation, an evangelical faith-based organization, to urge Congress to oppose Obama's DOMA directive. The groups are supporting the plight of Republican House Speaker John Boehner.

Unity from Egypt's Revolution Short-Lived

✖ At least a dozen people were killed and roughly 140 wounded in violence between Christians and Muslims in Cairo on Tuesday night.

Carl Moeller with Open Doors says, "A local imam called out their people of the village to 'kill all the Christians.' It is disappointing that so close on the heels of a grand sweep of democracy and good feeling between Christians and Muslims in that country, we see such a quick turn back to the extremism."

Bibles Provided for Prisoners in Developing Countries

✖ Discipleship programs in prisons worldwide are booming.

Prison ministry Crossroad Bible Institute (CBI) has grown in

no small numbers across Africa and has expanded to reach people on nearly every continent of the globe. But more growth means more resources. Without a few key resources, personal growth can hardly move forward at all.

A problem arose within CBI programs, especially in developing nations. "These prisoners were finding it very difficult to obtain Bibles when just getting enough food to eat is a big enough issue," says Spanish and International Programs Coordinator Cynthia Williams. "And on top of that, our satellite campus directors were themselves facing limited resources."

The World Upside Down in the Middle East

✖ *The World Turned Upside Down* was the title of Sir Christopher Hill's history of the English Civil War. Today, as then, our world is being turned upside down. From Tunisia to Libya, the Middle East is quaking. Not since the fall of the Berlin Wall has the world witnessed such far-reaching geopolitical reconfiguration, human tragedy and hope mixed together. The question on the minds of world leaders is "What's next?"

There is great uncertainty among many that the people in the Middle East cannot govern themselves, having become so dependent upon despots and rogue dictators. I have even heard reasonable people opine that the ability to govern democratically is a uniquely Western European concept thus beyond tribal, autocratically-ruled peoples of the Middle East.

I reject that idea. History demonstrates that there is only one reason why Western nations have been endowed with democracy: because such expressions of liberty are built on the bedrock of the Bible. Before Jesus taught that you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free (John 8:32), Barbaric tribes roaming across Europe would have given the worst Middle Eastern dictators a run for their money.

Muslim Brotherhood Calls for War on Israel

✖ Despite some skeptics, many Islam watchers report that the Muslim Brotherhood is an extremist group—and no friend of Israel.

Now, Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood is forming a political party called Freedom and Justice. Sa'd al-Katatni has been asked to lead the charge. This is a significant development because it marks the first time in the nearly century-long history of the Muslim Brotherhood that it has successfully organized a political party.

So rather than all out hijacking the revolution in Egypt as many expected, the Muslim Brotherhood has essentially walked through the open door of political upheaval.

Busy? Phone-In Healing Service Aims to Please

✖ In today's world you can do just about anything over the phone. You can order food. You can pay your bills—and you can get your healing.

At least that's the premise of an evangelism outreach in Seal Beach, Calif. If you are too busy to visit a church and have hands laid on you, two Seal Beach area ministries have your back.

Benjamin Altschul, pastor of Great Among The Nations, and Gwyn Vanghn, senior pastor of Faith Christian Assembly, are partnering on a March 20 event to let people phone in their prayer requests for healing—and they are expecting miracles.

Altschul says his ministry's outreaches are generally well-accepted, but the phone-in healing is the most popular because it takes modern technology to a higher level. Apparently, these phone-in healing prayers are bearing fruit.

Crisis in Ivory Coast Deepens

The Ivory Coast's political deadlock is degenerating quickly into civil war. Essentially, November's election results are being ignored by the incumbent, Laurent Gbagbo, who refuses to step aside. The internationally-recognized president, Alassane Ouattara, has yet to take office in spite of the appointment of a parallel government.

Meanwhile, beginning last weekend, supporters of both began

engaging each other. Gbagbo commands the loyalty of the army and much of the south while Ouattara has the support of the north.

Curt Cole, HCJB global vice president of International Ministries, says one of their partners, Fréquence Vie (Life Frequency), was caught in the crossfire in Abobo, a northern suburb of the capital of Abidjan: "They are still on the air, but they actually had one of their repeaters knocked off the air during a demonstration and destroyed." Repairs are estimated at \$20,000.