

Franklin Graham Evangelizes Nearly 100,000 in South Sudan

“Hope for a New Nation” brought the gospel home to nearly 100,000 people Friday and Saturday at John Gerang Memorial Park in Juba, and the people received the message with joy.

Both days began in sweltering heat, with the sun beating down on the thousands in attendance. People found shade where they could, or used umbrellas or even a washcloth on their heads to fight the heat.

In spite of the heat, the 500-member choir sang for more than a half hour straight in a jubilant offering of praise to God that had many in the crowd swaying and dancing as well.

As the sun sank lower, offering relief from the heat, The Tommy Coomes Band and Dennis Agajanian also presented songs of praise. Then Franklin Graham preached from the Word of God: The story of Bartimeus the blind man on Friday, and the story of Zacchaeus the tax collector on Saturday.

These are simple stories of how God met people in their need, but God obviously drove the message into hearts. Both evenings, when Graham gave the invitation to receive Christ, people young and old alike ran forward to the platform. Over the two nights, more than 6,270 responded to the invitation.

As the inquirers were being counseled on Saturday, Bishop James Lagos Alexander, national coordinator for the festival, said: “I think this is a great feeling. And it’s telling me that God is answering our prayers.

“And today, it’s wonderful. So God is reigning in this nation. God is blessing this nation. God is pouring in and bringing hope to this nation. And God’s Name will be exalted. And South Sudan is not going to be the same. God has visited us

yesterday and tonight, and we're not going to be the same. And the churches of this land are not going to be the same. Praise the Lord. May His Name be praised!"

Friday, Oct. 26—As the Hope for a New Nation Festival with Franklin Graham kicks off in Juba, South Sudan, tonight, tens of thousands of people are expected to gather at John Garang Memorial Park to hear a Gospel message from Franklin Graham, and music from a 500-voice choir, Dennis Agajanian and the Tommy Coomes Band.

With every minute that passes until the first note sounds at 5 p.m., excitement and anticipation are building. Pastor Mawan, senior pastor of Juba international Chapel, said his expectations for the Festival are high: "This is the first time since the nation has been formed that so many people of God will be coming together."

Mawan is praying that many people will come to know Jesus as their personal Savior during the Festival. "If they do," he added, "our churches will grow and we will have influence in our nation."

Afaf Awad, a woman counselor who attends Hope Pentecostal Church in Munuki, told *Decision* magazine that she has encouraged people from her family and her area to come with her to the festival. "I've spoken to many people; I didn't count them," she said. "Some of them have said they will come. So many responded, and today some people came and visited me at my house and asked me when the program will start."

Awad believes her involvement with the Festival is part of her life's purpose which is to proclaim His Name. "Through me, people in my family have received Jesus Christ. And I made a covenant with myself, a vow, that all my life I will be a servant of God."

Evangelist Charles Lumori with the Episcopal Church of the Sudan said he has seen the testimonies. "Already there are

people knowing Christ ... before the Festival, and now they want to come among this multitude to express their joy and happiness.”

During a Thursday dedication service, the choir stood patiently in a mixture of rain and a few moments of sun without complaining, reported Festival Director Hans Mannegren. “When the choir sang the Hope for a New Nation song, the strength of their voices and passion came through strongly. When they sang other praise songs in Arabic, their passion was equally as clear.

“They were also **praying** with great fervor as they dedicated the park and the meetings to the Lord,” said Mannegren.

“Only God knows what will happen after the Festival,” said Bishop Archangelo from the African Inland Church in Sudan. “I believe God is making a new beginning. This is a time that God is preparing us as his vessels to reach out to people in this new nation.”

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