



URBAN CURRENT

Brave enough for the new world?

Let's take a look at two articles that caught my eye in the last 30 days. The first is "Beyond City Limits." "The Age of Nations is over. The new urban age has begun," reads the tag line on this piece from *Foreign Policy*, September/October 2010 by Parag Khanna.

"Beyond City Limits" points out,

- More than half the world lives in cities
- Just 100 cities account for 30 percent of the world's economy and almost all its innovation
- New York City's economy alone is larger than six of the Sub-Saharan African economies combined
- New York City and London together still represent 40 percent of global market capitalization
- Hong Kong receives more tourists annually than all of India
- Jakarta is a megalopolis of 24 million
- Cairo's urban development has stretched so far from the city's core that it now encroaches directly on the pyramids 14 miles away
- Across India, more than 275,000,000 people are projected to move into the country's teeming cities over the next two decades
- By 2025, China is expected to have 15 super cities with an average population of 25 million (Europe will have none)

Khanna declares, "The 21st century will not be dominated by America or China, Brazil or India, but by the city. In an age that appears increasingly unmanageable, cities rather than states are now becoming the islands of government on which the future world order will be built. This new world is not — and will not be — one global village so much as a network of different ones."

Khanna describes the new reality. "These

cities are the real magnets of economies, the innovators of politics, and increasingly the drivers of diplomacy. They won't obey the same rules as the old compact of nations; they will write their own opportunistic codes of conduct animated by the need for efficiency, connectivity, and security above all else."

Furthermore, Khanna makes sure we are aware that "while western cities have dominated the ranks of leading urban centers since the industrial revolution...a major shift becomes apparent. There is an accelerating Asianization." He points out that, "for these emerging global hubs, modernization does not equal westernization. Asia's rising powers sell the West toys and oil and purchase world-class architecture and engineering in return. Western values like freedom of speech and religion are not part of the bargain."

Khanna, senior research fellow at the New America Foundation, concludes his piece saying, "What happens in our cities, simply put, matters more than what happens anywhere else."

How does all of this information square with your view of the world and impact our thinking regarding the Great Commission? How do we approach evangelism and missions and how does this reality influence our preaching, our teaching, our giving, our sense of urgency? How does it influence our approach to missions training, education, conferences, and funding?

Now, let's glance at "Urban Urgency, Missionaries Follow Migration to City Centers" by Sara Eekhoff Zylstra in the August 2010 *Christianity Today*. Zylstra points out that fewer than 30 percent of the world's 2.5 billion people in 1950 lived in cities. "By 2050 almost 70 percent of the world's estimated 10 billion people will do so." She cites movement by the Internation-

al Mission Board (SBC) InterVarsity Missions, New Tribes Missions, as well as several other organizations as moving in very deliberate ways toward an urban focus.

Clearly, we are not so concerned about trends that will be studied and written up in sociology texts. Our eyes are on the individuals who make up the mass. Reaching cities is the Bible plan to evangelize the world. Modern urbanization has been underway for 100 years. Where have we been? What are we doing now?

Why are New Testament churches, stewards of the greatest news ever and peopled by those with a great passion to reach the lost, so stuck in old paradigms having nothing to do with gospel truth? Why are we so slow to keep up with what God is doing in the world?

New Testament churches ought to be bands of Special Forces. We know whose flag we are under. We understand the cause. We know who the enemy is. We are ready. We are adaptable. We are committed to the mission, not the method. We don't have to review the litany of silliness do we? The people who opposed the organ as an instrument of the devil. The people who made it a matter of orthodoxy that Psalms be sung and not songs written by men.

New Testament churches ought to be incubators of innovation committed to change as change is needed to carry out the mission.

God is at work in His world. He has called us to work with Him. The night is coming. If we do not maximize the urban opportunity, we will answer for it at the Bema seat.

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