



APOSTLES TO THE CITY

**Biblical
Strategies for
Urban Missions**



Roger S. Greenway

Apostles to the City

**Biblical Strategies for
Urban Missions**

Roger S. Greenway



**BAKER BOOK HOUSE
Grand Rapids, Michigan**

Copyright 1978 by
Baker Book House Company

ISBN: 0-8010-3724-7

Second printing, December 1981

Unless otherwise indicated Scripture quotations are the author's own translation.

References marked NIV are from the New International Version, New Testament, © 1973 by New York Bible Society International, © 1974 by New York International Bible Society.

References marked RSV are from the Revised Standard Version, © 1946, 1952, 1971, 1973 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

*To my parents,
whose half century of Christian ministry
has enriched many lives in America and
born fruit in remote parts of the earth.*

“The voice of the Lord cries to the city.”
Micah 6:9a

Contents

Foreword	9
Introduction	11
1. Jonah: Hope for Doomed Cities	15
2. Jeremiah: How to Be a City Saint	29
3. Nehemiah: The Secret of Urban Renewal	43
4. Barnabas: The Making of a Missionary Church	57
5. Paul: The Urban Strategist—His Message	69
6. Paul: The Urban Strategist—His Method	79

Foreword

Twenty years ago, Roger S. Greenway began his ministry as a missionary to Ceylon (now, Sri Lanka) for the Christian Reformed Church. For five years he and his wife, Edna, worked for the renewal and extension of the Dutch Reformed Church in that island nation, beginning at Colombo.

Fifteen years ago, Rev. Greenway moved to Mexico. He devoted himself ardently to evangelization, church planting, urban outreach, and Bible institute training for national workers. These ministries continued for seven years.

Eight years ago, missionary Greenway turned to postgraduate study at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, conducting research in the history and practice of the church's outreach to cities since Bible times. From this study and his own experience in Ceylon and Mexico, Dr. Greenway completed his dissertation and published a book entitled, *Urban Strategy for Latin America*. Subsequently, he was appointed by his denomination as Latin America Secretary for Christian Reformed World Missions.

One year ago, Dr. Greenway presented the annual Baker Mission Lecture series at Reformed Bible College on the theme, "Apostles to the City." In these lectures, the author turned to the Bible for examples and instructions on urban evangelization. The present volume embodies these presentations on Jonah, Jeremiah, Nehemiah, Barnabas, and Paul.

Dr. Greenway's lectures taught and excited students and faculty members alike. They brought biblical history and insights to bear upon conditions facing the church in the world's cities today. We are pleased that Baker Book House is making them available in published form through this volume.

Ten years ago, Reformed Bible College began its annual Mexico Summer Training Session (STS). Dr. and Mrs. Greenway gave much help to that first group and have continued to encourage the development of this missionary orientation course through its first decade. We consider it particularly gratifying that Dr. Greenway has designated all royalties from the sale of this edition for Mexico Summer Training Session and warmly express our thanks to him.

I heartily commend this book to the reader because it speaks so directly to the mission of the church today and because Dr. Greenway is superbly qualified by experience and study to present this material.

*Dick L. Van Halsema
President, Reformed Bible College*

Introduction

The purpose of this book is to shed light from Scripture on the nature and scope of the church's urban mission. The Bible contains fourteen hundred references to the city, and there are at least twenty-five examples of what can be called urban ministry in the historical books alone. With this amount of scriptural data before us, it is not surprising that both the Old and New Testaments provide examples of outstanding urban ministries which give us important insights into God's will for cities. In the chapters that follow, I will examine a number of these passages and apply their insights to the contemporary world situation. At the same time I have drawn from my own experience in urban mission in Asia and Latin America in the hope that through the interplay of biblical teaching, field experience, and contemporary challenges, new insights will be found that will help us find our way as missionaries in today's cities.

One of the underlying assumptions of this book is that the development of a biblical urban apostolate is vitally needed today. Throughout history God has called his servants to address the gospel to cities, and at no time has this been more urgent than in today's urbanizing world. The twentieth century has witnessed the growth of city populations beyond all expectations. Some cities in Latin America will have twenty million people by the year 2000. In France, one out of every five Frenchmen currently lives in Paris or its satellite communities. The world's largest cities are in Asia, and no one really knows how many people some of these cities contain. North America represents a peculiar situation, with populations flowing both to and from the city and an urban culture which dominates the entire country. The only conclusion we can reach is that at no time in history has it been more true than now that he who wins the city, wins the world. For Christians this makes the development of a biblical and relevant urban apostolate a matter of primary concern.

A second assumption of this book is that the church must move quickly to make its impact on the city, or the city will soon have reshaped the church. If the city shapes the church, we can be sure that the church will no longer be the servant of God with redeeming power for the salvation of men, but will have become a slave to the secular thinking and lifestyles of urban society. In many ways this has happened already, for we see how silent and inert the church can be at those very points in our civilization where decisions are made and actions planned which affect the lives of millions. The church as a whole does not know what to say to the city, and the individual Christian is equally bewildered because the secular spirit has gained so much influence. Therefore, this book also calls for the renewal of the church as a prerequisite for urban apostolate. Without the renewal of the church there is little hope for the city.

The third assumption is that only a "holistic" approach to urban mission can satisfy either the biblical injunctions or the needs of the city. By holistic mission I mean an approach to the city which first of all proclaims by word and deed the whole Christ, Savior and Lord, Redeemer and King. The church needs the whole gospel—the meaning and implications of the redemptive events of the cross, resurrection, and session at God's right hand must remain together. Second, holistic urban missions refuses to divide human needs into neat segments (such as spiritual, material, psychological), but proclaims the indivisibility of the human person in the redemptive purpose of God. Consequently, holistic mission strategy unites word with deed, worship with service, and fellowship with mission. It takes its cue from what Jesus did and the apostles after him. They came preaching the gospel of the kingdom, which set whole cities in an uproar.

The fourth underlying assumption of this book is expressed in the summary statement of the writer to the Hebrews: "For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come" (13:14). The march of the great men of faith throughout the centuries is toward the city. Their pilgrimage, their warfare, their constructive passion, were inspired by the vision of a city—a city well-founded, with order and justice. Its architect and builder is God. If we could write a continuation of Hebrews 11 we would add the names of apostles, martyrs, reformers, statesmen, preachers, and missionaries, who through the years were part of

that great march of faith. Seeing the city afar off, they set their faces toward it. They fought fierce battles and suffered severe losses. But they never reached the final goal or saw the city built, for like their predecessors, "all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised" (11:39). In our discussions about urban apostolate and the meaning of holistic mission strategy today, we must bear in mind that we are on a pilgrimage of faith and will not see the ultimate accomplished nor the city of God erected here by our efforts. By man's own doing, or even by the vigorous efforts of Christian men and women, cities of earth can never become the city of God which we seek. At the heart of city life, the raw individualism of human selfishness sits enthroned—varying its expression and altering its method with time and place. Consequently, each city bears the seeds of its own destruction. But still the pilgrimage continues, attracting impassioned men who share the dream of the heroes listed in Hebrews, a vision of the city of God, the world at the feet of Jesus—the ultimate goal of urban apostolate.

A major portion of this book was first presented in the form of lectures as part of the Baker Lecture Series at the Reformed Bible College in the spring of 1976. I wish to express my appreciation to Mr. Herman Baker, the sponsor of this series, for his enlightened concern for world mission and his generous support of the lecture series. I am grateful to Dr. Dick Van Halsema and the faculty of the Reformed Bible College of Grand Rapids, Michigan for their invitation to present these lectures. My thanks goes also to Miss Debra Vugteveen, my competent secretary, who patiently typed and retyped the final manuscript in preparation for publication.

Along with principal and practical insights into biblical urban mission, I have sought to weave into every page the sense of urgency I feel for urban evangelization. The cities of the world need modern apostles, men and women of God who have a particular burden for city people. By this I do not imply that rural work is unimportant. But as the world becomes increasingly urban with city populations mushrooming everywhere, we must learn what it means to advance the gospel among city people and plant among them living churches, lighthouses of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. To that end this book is dedicated.

Roger S. Greenway