

Unreached Peoples: The Nuristani People of Pakistan

by Paul Hattaway

The Nuristani people, living in northern Pakistan, are 100% Muslim and have turned their backs on the Christian faith they once considered, but we can pray for them to know God and become the 'land of the light'.

Scripture: Isaiah 9:2, Matthew 5:14, John 8:12, 2 Corinthians 4:6, Ephesians 5:8

Topics: "Missions Work", "Spiritual Darkness"

Description

This sermon sheds light on the Nuristani settlements in Pakistan, originally animists who converted to Islam after being influenced by neighboring Muslims. Despite once inviting Christians to share about Jesus, they are now suspicious and hostile towards Christianity. The Nuristani live in spiritual darkness, isolated in their traditions and customs, with limited rights for women and a strict, closed-off society. The sermon emphasizes the need for God to open their hearts to His light and truth, transforming their lives and community.

Transcript

Today, there are three Nuristani settlements in two valleys, in the north of Pakistan. They fled from neighboring Afghanistan and made their home just across the border in Pakistan. The name of these settlements is Shekhenande, which means converted to Islam.

The word Nuristan means land of the light, but these Nuristanis live in total spiritual darkness. They were animists for more than 800 years and successfully kept Muslims out of their area. In about 1865, the Nuristani invited the Christians to come and tell them about Jesus.

But no one had enough courage to go to this uninviting area, where the people grow their crops and farm with sheep and goats high in the mountains. In 1895, the king of Afghanistan sent his soldiers to convert the Nuristani to Islam. Today, the Nuristani are suspicious of any outsiders. They are fanatical Muslims and hostile towards Christianity and the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As far as we know, there are no Christians, nor is the Bible or any other Christian literature available in their language. It is an honor for a Nuristani to be known for their honesty and wisdom. Wealth is measured by the amount of goats you own and success in the amount of sons you have.

Houses are two or three floors high and built in the valley against the steep mountain slopes to catch most of the winter sun and maximize the use of fertile ground in the narrow valley. Houses are built with wood and put together with mortar. They are built close together and generally on top of each other.

The people live on the top floor. The bottom floor is for animals or used as a storage place for food during the long winter months. In the winter, snowfalls are up to two meters deep, the temperature is around minus 20 degrees Celsius, and the Nuristani are cut off from the rest of the world.

Unlike most other Muslim groups in this part of the world, the Nuristani sit on low chairs and sleep on low beds without mattresses. The single room house has no windows, and a small stove in the middle of the room is used for heating and to prepare food. The Nuristani are mainly stock farmers, but also farm with fruit and vegetables to a lesser extent.

Farming is mainly self-supporting. Time stands still here, and technology hasn't arrived yet. Women who leave town must wear a veil.

Even within the town, women and girls must always be veiled. A woman's rights and freedom in this culture is very limited. Marriages are arranged, and often the bride, normally still a child, will meet her husband for the first time on the day of the wedding ceremony.

Men often have more than one wife. This causes frequent family problems with jealous wives, and the youngest wife often becomes the slave of the others. Today the Nuristanis are 100% Muslim.

They have turned their backs on the Christian faith they were once curious about. Pray that God would open the door to the hearts of the Nuristani, so that they can know him and truly become the land of the light. For more UN videos visit www.un.org

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