

# Unreached Peoples: The Tajiks of Uzbekistan

by Paul Hattaway

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*The speaker shares about the Tajiks of Uzbekistan, highlighting their cultural heritage and the challenges they face in their faith.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 3:5

**Topics:** "Cultural Identity", "Islamic Context"

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## Description

This sermon reflects on the historical significance of Samarkand and Bukhara as silk road trading hubs and centers of Islamic culture, highlighting the challenges faced by Tajiks in Uzbekistan to maintain their cultural identity amidst political pressures. It explores the architectural marvels of Samarkand, such as the Rigistan complex, and the spiritual practices at Shah-e-Zinda, shedding light on the blend of Islam and folk beliefs among the Tajik community. The sermon also touches on the struggle of preserving religious traditions in a changing societal landscape influenced by Western attitudes.

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## Transcript

Samarkand and Bukhara, glittering oases on the banks of the Zerefshan River, grew to fame as important silk road trading hubs and centers of Islamic culture and learning. Though they were made part of Uzbekistan in Soviet times, these cities remained predominantly Tajik. As many as two million Tajiks live in Uzbekistan today, although many feel political pressure to deny their Tajik roots.

Famous as a tourist destination, Samarkand boasts some of the most impressive examples of ancient Islamic architecture in Central Asia. The Rigistan, a vast complex consisting of several huge madrasas, or Islamic schools, gives visitors a glimpse of the past glories of Tajik culture. Climbing up the stairway to heaven, Muslim pilgrims come to offer prayers and seek blessing from the dead saints.

This is the Shah-e-Zinda, tomb of the living king. The mausoleums along this street of tombs date from the 12th century. I am proud to be a Muslim, because when a man is born, he is not an animal.

He must be in good condition with God and with people around him. All Tajiks will tell you they are Muslim, but the pilgrims at Shah-e-Zinda are typical of the Tajiks in Uzbekistan. Their faith is a mix of Islam and folk superstitions.

When we don't switch on the lights on Tuesday nights, ghosts will come. From this tradition, my mother said me. And my mother's mother said my mother.

The nominal observance of Islam in Uzbekistan is apparent in the abundance of alcohol and the decidedly Western attitude of young people. Yes, I was brought up in Soviet time. At that time, it wasn't possible to give me appropriate upbringing.

My mother wants me to learn prayers. Yes, but I haven't got the time yet. Turn the clock back.

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