

The Value of a Soul #15

Islam and the Soul

The rise of Islam emphasizes the value of a single soul.

Muhammad, the founder of Islam, was exposed to various influences in the Arabia of the 6th and 7th centuries.

Judaism would have been one of those influences. The particular brand of Judaism that was prevalent in Arabia, however, was nothing like the religion of the Old Testament. In addition to some biblical elements, it consisted largely of an accumulation of centuries of myth, folklore, tradition, legend, uninspired commentary, and speculation. Muhammad would have heard this material recited orally in the social interactions of his time. He had enough discernment to reject this “Judaism” as a religion, but he appears to have accepted some biblical principles (such as monotheism) along with numerous extra biblical additions. Many of these ideas have found their way into the Qur’an in a modified form.

It was a similar story with Christianity. Muhammad was not exposed to pure New Testament Christianity, but rather to corrupted forms, such as Byzantine and Roman Catholic varieties. These he also generally rejected.

Muhammad did have various concerns. He was troubled by the idolatry, the lawlessness, and the incessant feuding of the desert tribes. He was also a contemplative man who liked to retire from the hustle of daily life for periods of solitary meditation. No doubt all of the above factors played upon his mind on those occasions.

Through various circumstances he found himself in a position of influence in the society of his day. He was simultaneously burdened with a sense of mission. He began putting together a new monotheistic religious and political system which drew upon his own meditations, and the Jewish and Christian sources mentioned. He wanted to replace the prevalent idolatry and unite the warring Arab tribes together in a common cause.

How much would world history have been changed if that young man’s early experiences in Arabia had been different? What if he had been exposed to vigorous, evangelistic, doctrinally sound New Testament Christianity, instead of corrupted forms of Judaism and denominational error?

In His Great Commission, Jesus said that His church should “Go . . . baptize . . . and teach” (Mt. 28:19, 20). If only the church over the centuries had simply and energetically obeyed Jesus’ words what a different world we would be living in today! Instead of becoming the founder of Islam, Muhammad might have become a powerful and effective evangelist. The conversion of that one soul might have changed world history.

Let’s not repeat the mistake of history. Let us take the Great Commission as our charter and priority, and make it our business to reach out to each precious soul.