

# Immigration and Citizenship of Christ

By Doug Hamilton

One of the big issues in this coming Presidential election this year is United States citizenship and immigration. This has not only been an issue in the last few years, but throughout the entire history of our country.

- We had many mass migration from many different countries in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Irish came to the Northeast, the Spanish to South Florida and the French to Louisiana. To the original settlers it was disturbing to have all the new comers arrive, for they were different people with different customs. Millions of Africans were brought here in a forced immigration through slavery. That in itself had a tremendous stress on the society bringing out the worst in society.
- During the industrial revolution, we had millions of Germans and Dutch who fled Europe and came to the Midwest. The previous residents of these areas were also stressed because of all the changes to the demographics.
- This all led to the United States Supreme Court to rule that immigration was a federal issue. Congress passed the Page Act of 1875, also known as the Asian Exclusion Act. It outlawed Asian contract laborers, banned Asian prostitutes and made it so that known criminals could not immigrate to the US.
- As economies overseas waned, millions of low-skilled or unskilled immigrants fled Norway, Sweden, Italy and Russia to settle in the U.S. Nativists began to ask, “Is the United States a melting pot or a dumping ground for the world?” The government soon initiated a means to weed out these people through a literacy program. Immigrants were expected to read and write in their own language before they could be admitted.
- The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, also known as the Hart-Cellar Act, abolished the system of national-origin quotas. By equalizing immigration policies, the act resulted in new immigration from non-European nations, which changed the ethnic make-up of the United States. From that time we have had millions of more immigrants coming dozens of countries which were not represented from before.
- Today our nation is struggling with the problem of illegal immigration of undocumented aliens. This is due partially from politicians unwilling to enforce the presence laws on the books. Lawless politicians ignore the law and instead have set up many dozens of sanctuary cities, rules and rewards for those who are breaking our laws.

## Why cover a two-part series on immigration and citizenship?

The purpose for covering such a topic is two-fold: 1) Better understand how God feels about immigration and 2) Better understand the relevance of our own citizenship in heaven.

## Under the Law of the Old Testament, it was very evil to oppress the alien.

- Exodus 22:21, “You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”
- Jeremiah 7:5-7 indicates that oppression of the alien is paramount to hurting widows and orphans, shedding innocent blood and idolatry.

Under the Law, Israel was expected to be immigration-friendly in their approach to aliens which entered their land. They were not to take advantage of the alien in any way. When the alien chose to dwell in the land of Israel, they also had keep the word of God. They were to...

# Immigration and Citizenship of Christ

By Doug Hamilton

- Participate in the Passover (Exodus 12:19; Numbers 9:14).
- Observe the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:29).
- Carryout the Burnt Offering (Leviticus 17:9).
- Observe the Red Heifer offering (Numbers 19:10).
- Abstain from consuming blood (Leviticus 17:10).
- Refrain from abominations (Leviticus 18:26; 24:16).
- Receive the same punishments as the native (Leviticus 20:2).
- Be provided the same welfare system of the nation (Leviticus 23:22 “gathering grain left for the poor”).
- Benefit from the cities of refuge (Numbers 35:15).
- Receive fair trial when in legal trouble (Deuteronomy 1:16).

The nation of Israel had the fairest system of immigration in the world. What was the reason for the Israelites to love the strangers and aliens who ventured into the land? It is summarized in Leviticus 19:34-35, “*When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.*” The LORD wanted the Israelites to be the salt and light of the world.

Under the Law, God was not against immigration, but for it. On the other hand, His policy was “when in Rome, do as the Romans”, or in this case, “when in Israel do as the Israelites”. Both the Jew and the alien were considered to be under the same rules when it came to the Law of the Land. Numbers 15:16, “*There is to be one law and one ordinance for you and for the alien who sojourns with you.*” Immigration in the Old Testament was not multiculturalism, but in respect to assimilation to the people, principles and policies of the written Law of the land. They were to be in subjection to the governing authorities if they wanted to live in the country of Israel.

Malachi 3:6 tells us that God does not change in His principles. If He required the Jews to be pro-immigration, then that same hospitality to strangers should be applicable both in the Patriarchal dispensation before the Law and in the Christian dispensation after the Law. This we find to be true from scriptural evidence.

## Hospitality to strangers was the gold-standard prior to the Law.

- Job 31:32, “The alien has not lodged outside, *For* I have opened my doors to the traveler.”
- Abraham showed hospitality to strangers by providing a meal in Genesis 18:1ff.
- The sons of Heth showed hospitality to Abraham in securing a burial site for his family in Genesis 23.
- Rebekah showed hospitality to the servant of Isaac in Genesis 24 by watering his camels.
- Jethro showed hospitality to the stranger Moses in Exodus 2 by taking him into his home and giving him employment.

## Hospitality to strangers is the gold-standard after the Law.

- In Hebrews 13:2 the Christians are commanded, “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers...”
- The Christians are reminded in

# Immigration and Citizenship of Christ

By Doug Hamilton

- Christian widows being taken care of by the church family must be proven to “*have shown hospitality to strangers*” 1 Timothy 5:10.
- The new convert Cornelius showed hospitality to Peter and his comrades in Acts 10:48.
- Lydia was hospitable to her new missionary friends in Acts 16:15.
- Priscilla and Aquila were hospitable to Paul by allowing him to live with them in Acts 18:2-3.
- The natives of Malta showed great hospitality to Paul and the other shipwreck victims in Acts 28:1-2.

If in any of those cases the stranger were to be disrespectful to the house rules, they would be in jeopardy of departure or deportation from the residence. It has always been God’s principle for his people to hold to a pro-immigration position, but it is not without condition. If in any of these cases there was not conformity to the law, then they could not reside in that place. Citizenship in a nation is never without condition.

Christians follow the same path. Paul wrote to Christians in Philippians 3:20, “*For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ...*” He also wrote in Ephesians 5:19, “*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household...*” We were once lost in a world of sin and doubt, but Jesus delivered us from it all through His blood.

We also have conditions, and one of them is to obey the law of the land. Christians are under the same principle as well. Romans 13:1 states, “*Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.*” Peter further added in 1 Peter 2:13, “*Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority...*” What is the present law of the land in the United States and how does one gain citizenship?

## The United States Naturalization Law

To become a naturalized citizen of the United States, a foreign national first must meet several legal standards:

- *Entry, residence, and physical presence:* The applicant must lawfully enter the country and gain legal permanent resident status. After becoming a legal resident, a foreign national must reside in the United States continuously for five years.
- *Age:* A naturalization applicant must be at least eighteen years old.
- *Literacy and education:* The applicant must possess the ability to understand, speak, read, and write basic English. Applicants must also demonstrate knowledge of U.S. history, politics, and government. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) administers an examination to applicants that they must pass to qualify for naturalization.
- *Moral character:* Applicants must show their good moral character, and that they sustained this standard throughout their residence in the United States.
- *Attachment to constitutional principles:* Applicants must show they are “attached to the principles of the Constitution of the United States, and well-disposed to the good order and happiness of the United States.” This requirement ensures that new citizens generally agree with the philosophical foundation of the community. Attachment to the Constitution includes a commitment to the Bill of Rights and a belief in representative

## Immigration and Citizenship of Christ

By Doug Hamilton

democracy. Individuals well disposed to good order and happiness can show they like the United States and believe in its political systems.

- *Oath of allegiance to the United States*: The applicant must pledge allegiance to the United States, renouncing other national allegiances. The pledge includes an obligation to support the Constitution and to bear arms on behalf of the United States if required.

This is the mechanism which is in place to gain citizenship in the United States. When someone comes across the border, takes a boat to our shores or flies into an airport, this does not make them a citizen, but a guest. They are still expected to follow the law.

When American employers hire the immigrant workers with the intention of paying them slave wages, they are guilty of not only breaking the law, but also abusing the alien. When the same employers pay special interest money to lobbyists to not allow the present laws on the books from being enforced that is also a crime. They are in trouble with both man and God.

The result is where we are today in this country. Unenforced and out of date laws, causing instability in our nation. There are millions of undocumented aliens in our country, most of which are here only to provide for their family.

Three Things We Can Do: Show the immigrant the love of Christ.

- 1) Reserve some benevolence to fund immigrants seeking legal citizenship.
  - a. This can include some basic needs like food and clothing.
  - b. Perhaps they need to take a GED program or have some tutoring.
  - c. Perhaps they need transportation to Naturalization meetings.
- 2) Start a "Learn English Through the Bible Program" for those who are illiterate in English.
  - a. This is a program to familiarize them with English and the Bible at the same time.
  - b. Tens of thousands have become Christians through this over the years.
  - c. It also allows you to build a relationship with them.
- 3) Show them how to gain Citizenship in Heaven.
  - a. This is always the primary goal.
  - b. Perhaps call it a "Citizenship Program".
  - c. They might even go back to their own country and spread the kingdom.

In the next lesson, we will cover in more depth our own Citizenship in heaven. What does it mean and how does this status affect our lives in Christ?