

Week 4: THE LAW OF THE LAND VS THE LAW OF GOD

Introduction Questions

Discuss these questions before starting this lesson.

Do U.S. laws always follow what God wants? Can you think of any immigration laws, current or past?

Read through the U.S. laws and biblical laws as a group and then discuss the questions at the end.

U.S. Law

Constitution of the United States Article 1 Section 8

The Congress shall have the power to...establish a uniform Rule of Naturalization.

Immigration and Nationality Act

This is a long law that can be read more in-depth at <https://www.uscis.gov/laws-and-policy/legislation/immigration-and-nationality-act>

Some of the provisions and restrictions in this act include:

- Right to counsel (If the alien cannot produce counsel the court has no obligation to provide one, they just have the right to counsel if they can afford it).
 - This has led to news stories of alien children in diapers “defending” themselves in immigration court.
- Burden of proof upon the alien
- Work afforded to non-U.S. citizens
- Penalties and fines
- “Deportable aliens”
- Visas, asylum, and levels of immigration

*Note: This law calls anyone not a U.S. citizen or a “legal” worker by their standards an “alien.”

Refugee Act of 1980

Following World War II, the US admitted hundreds of thousands of displaced Europeans. In 1975, the US again resettled hundreds of thousands of refugees – this time from Indochina. At this time, Congress passed the Refugee Act of 1980, which standardized the resettlement services for all refugees admitted to the US.

Since 1975, the United States has welcomed over 3.4 million refugees from all around the world in every one of our 50 states. The average number of refugees admitted annually since 1975 has been 76,527 individuals per year; in 2019, only 30,000

refugees were admitted. In 2020, President Trump determined that only 18,000 refugees would be admitted to the United States, a historic low.

Biblical Law

*Exodus 23:1-9 (emphasis on **bold** verse)*

¹ You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with the wicked to act as a malicious witness. ² You shall not follow a majority in wrongdoing; when you bear witness in a lawsuit, you shall not side with the majority so as to pervert justice; ³ nor shall you be partial to the poor in a lawsuit.

⁴ When you come upon your enemy's ox or donkey going astray, you shall bring it back.

⁵ When you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden and you would hold back from setting it free, you must help to set it free.

⁶ You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in their lawsuits. ⁷ Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and those in the right, for I will not acquit the guilty. ⁸ You shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the officials, and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.

⁹ You shall not oppress a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.

Leviticus 19:33-34

³³ When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. ³⁴ The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

Deuteronomy 1:16

¹⁶ I charged your judges at that time: "Give the members of your community a fair hearing, and judge rightly between one person and another, whether citizen or resident alien."

Hebrews 13:1-2

¹ Let mutual love continue. ² Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.

Discussion Questions

1. First and foremost, how does the use of the word “alien” both in U.S. law and biblical law create barriers between people who “legally” reside in a country and those who do not? Are legal residents and “aliens” still all a part of the same body and family of Christ?
2. What are the differences in U.S. law versus biblical law? How should we treat those outside our legal definitions of “citizen” according to I.C.E. and U.S. immigration versus how God commands?
3. Who should we listen to?
4. How should we treat refugees and immigrants (both legal and illegal)?
5. What is the reasoning that God gives for why we should not oppress the “alien” but love them?
6. What are ways we can change our U.S. immigration laws and “quotas” to reflect a more biblical acceptance of the stranger among us?

Prayer and the End of Week 4

Resources

History.com Editors. "U.S. Immigration Timeline." History.com. A&E Television Networks, December 21, 2018.
<https://www.history.com/topics/immigration/immigration-united-states-timeline>.

"Immigration and Nationality Act." USCIS, July 10, 2019. <https://www.uscis.gov/laws-and-policy/legislation/immigration-and-nationality-act>.

"The Constitution of the United States: A Transcription." National Archives and Records Administration. National Archives and Records Administration. Accessed November 22, 2021. <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>.

The New Interpreter's Study Bible New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha.
Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003.