

## V. THE GLOBAL IMMIGRATION CHALLENGE

### Resolution by the Church of God of Prophecy 95th International Assembly, 2008

Today a significant amount of fear and hatred is negatively affecting the mindset of many nations because of the redistribution of population groups through immigration. As Christians, we must ensure that our response to the issue of immigration is directed by a Christian World View that is shaped by biblical principles rather than secular or current attitudes. A number of biblical principles relevant to immigration run through the Bible. Primarily, we as Christians are aliens on this earth. "...And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth" (Hebrews 11:13 NIV). Our status as aliens and strangers formulates the basis for our attitudes and responses toward those people who live outside our society.

We affirm as Christians that our material possessions do not really belong to us. The Promised Land belonged to the Israelites only in the sense that as host, God allowed the Israelites to dwell in the Promised Land as His guests (Leviticus 25:23). Indeed, the children of God were strangers and foreigners in the land they lived in. Similarly, as aliens and strangers in our world today, the material resources of this world do not belong to us. We have what we have because of God; as our host, He has distributed material resources to us, His guests. As recipients of God's graciousness and generosity, we need to guard against selfishness and possessiveness, which would cloud our attitude toward immigrants.

We affirm that we are all strangers and foreigners in this world. Borders and national ethnic identity should never separate us as God's people. As non-citizens working in their country of residence, aliens exist outside the social and political network of the society they are residing in; thus, they are rendered powerless. Aliens are very vulnerable to exploitation. As Christians, we should recall our roots as aliens and, thus, identify with their plight (Exodus 23:9) by treating them with kindness and helping them as earlier nations did to Israel and were blessed by God for their generosity. As Christians, no one should ever be considered an outsider. "... The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself..." (Leviticus 19:33, 34 NIV). The Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-40; Mark 12:30, 31; Luke 10:27) is to apply to the alien because he or she is our neighbor.

We affirm the privilege of serving the outsiders of society that mirrors the ministry and life of Jesus. Because Christ identified with the stranger, we are to extend the same treatment to the alien and stranger that Jesus would give to others (Matthew 25:3-5 KJV). Historically, immigration policies around the world appear to be directed more by racism and economic self-interest than compassion. Immigration quotas throughout many nations have favored people groups established long ago because of political interest or racial preferences while limiting immigrants from less desirable nations because of education, economic status, or trade skills. We must be people of compassion who pray and extend love to those caught up in the confusing and unjust immigration maze, as the Lord would be to the outcast of His day.

We affirm that God has a purpose in the migration moves of people around the world. "Are not you Israelites the same to me as the Cushites [Nile region]?" declares the LORD. "Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor [Crete] and the Arameans from Kir?" (Amos 9:7 NIV). God has never asked us to understand His purposes; however, today's immigration situation presents the church an opportunity to do ministry among diverse people of every race or ethnic background. By His grace and only for His grace alone, we could have been one of these "little ones" (e.g., Matthew 10:42; 18:6) had we been born in a different time or another country where the suffering, political, and social injustices would have forced us to flee looking for a better life for our loved ones. Therefore, we did not choose the country where we were born, but we can make the choice to show God's love for the lost, His compassion for the afflicted, and His Spirit of service toward our neighbor, the "stranger at our gates" (Deuteronomy 14:21; 24:14; 31:12). As His children, we are called by God to aid the vulnerable. We must see the alien and the stranger as individuals made in the image of God, the object of Christ's love. Furthermore, we must see not only them, but all people from every nation as having intrinsic worth by God, needing our affirmation and acceptance.