A MIXED MULTITUDE (Num 11:1-6)

A. What is meant by a “mixed multitude” (mm)?

1. “Hebrew 'acpecuph (as-pes-oof'): gathered up together, i.e. a promiscuous assemblage (not selective of a single class of people)” (Strong’s).

2. “A collection, a rabble, a collected multitude” (Thayer’s).


4. One commentator referred to it as “the riff-raff, which followed the fortunes of Israel out of Egypt, where they had probably been strangers & slaves themselves” (Pulpit Comm. Volume II, pg 106).

[There are lessons & warnings for (us) the church as we consider the “mixed multitude” within Israel.

First of all, where did it come from?]
2. Some would tag along simply to share in the wealth the Egyptians readily gave Israel at her departure.

3. And others may have been asked to come along by acquaintances & well wishers. For example…

Num 10:29 – Now Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses’ father-in-law, "We are setting out for the place of which the Lord said, 'I will give it to you.' Come with us, & we will treat you well; for the Lord has promised good things to Israel."

C. So what became of the (mm)?

1. Since we don’t read any more about it, most of those people probably went back to Egypt; they were not lawfully bound to the Israelites nor obligated to serve the Lord.

2. Or they may have foreseen the difficulties that lay ahead for the Israelites & were happy to return to the slavery, fleshly indulgences & sin in Egypt.

3. There was a (mm) that sprung up in the days of Nehemiah, but it was finally separated from Israel (Neh 13:3).

[The lesson for us stems from the fact that we can find the same situation existing in the church.]

II. A MIXED MULTITUDE IN THE CHURCH

A. A (mm) often exists in the presence of the Lord’s church at assembly times.

1. It is made up of those who have never obeyed the gospel of Christ.

2. …those who were at one time obedient to the Lord, but have fallen into sin.

3. …those who are Christians but who have not committed themselves to the local church & submitted to its elders (spiritual leadership).
4. What is a local church to do with a (mm)?

   a. For the ones who are not Christians, our mission to turn them to the Lord (\textit{1 Cor 14:22-25}).

   b. For the ones who have fallen away from the Lord, our mission is to exhort them to change their minds before it is too late (\textit{2 Thess 3:13-15}).

   c. For the one who will not commit to the local church, our mission is to convince them that they must (\textit{Rom 12:4-8}).

5. If it makes us uncomfortable to have a (mm) in the assembly, it will help to remember that within all of us there has been a bit of a (mm).

\textbf{B. And yet}, there is a potential for spiritual danger in having a (mm) among God’s people.

1. First of all, the (mm) was not in covenant relationship with God; they were not His people.

   a. God made no promises to them.

   b. The Promised Land was not their inheritance.

   c. They had no role in the tabernacle.

   d. They were not authorized to worship God.

   e. So they would be more inclined to forsake God, His people, His Law & His promises, & return to Egypt.

   f. That scenario could result in devastating consequences for God’s people; in fact, many of the Israelites were already getting the notion to do that – \textit{they were being influenced by their own lustful hearts, yes, but they were also being influenced by the (mm)}.
2. Similarly, a (mm) in a local church can have a poor or weakening influence on it.

   a. Its presence can impede the spiritual aim of the church, which is to follow the pattern of life & teaching set forth by the apostles (Phil 3:17; 4:9; 1 Thess 1:6; 2:10-14).

   b. It can interfere with the spiritual growth of the Christians in that church (1 Cor 15:33; 5:6, 11).

   c. Because the (mm) is at cross-purposes with the Lord’s will for His people (Matt 12:25, 30).

   d. Just to show you how subtle & unexpected this danger can be, consider the (mm) faced by Jesus & Paul (Matt 16:21-23; Acts 21:10-13).

   [The (mm) may have been dangerous most of all in this – IT DID NOT MEAN TO BE DANGEROUS AT ALL.]

III. GUARDING AGAINST A MIXED MULTITUDE

   A. There is really only one way to guard against the influence of a (mm) in the church, & that is to live more & more in pursuit of things above (Col 3:1-3).

   1. The (mm) as a whole will NOT alter the objects of its true affections, but some individual within it may – those who bow to the Lord’s will.

   2. So, THE CHANGE MUST BE IN US; we must have more love for the Lord & more zeal in carrying out His commands.

   2 Tim 2:22 – Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

   3. Timothy could not flee his lusts unless he was pursing spiritual aims with God’s people.

   4. Jesus had to do the most difficult thing of all in order to pursue heavenly things (Matt 12:46-50).
A. **A mixed multitude** in the church is both inevitable & unavoidable.

1. At any given meeting of church there will likely be people present who need to turn to the Lord in initial obedience to the gospel, or people who need to rededicate their lives to the Lord & begin serving Him & His body the church.

B. **As a faithful member** of the church, your challenge will be to live in that environment without being adversely affect by it - spiritual speaking.

1. To do that you’re going to have to set your affections on heavenly pursuits; you’re going to have to grow in the grace & knowledge of the Lord & Savior.

2. You will have to have to take charge of your life, & become a spiritual leader instead of a follower of men.

[Our ultimate goal as a congregation belonging to Christ is not to show how open minded we are in our willingness to worship in the presence of a (mm), but to win souls to Christ Jesus.]