

# Creepers

*Jude 1:1-7*

*With Study Questions*

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# Creepers

*Jude 1:1-7*

## **I. How Are You Here?**

**“Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ” (Jude 1:1).**

### **How'd We Get Here?**

When I was a youth pastor we had a student in our group who was a Viet Nameese boat-person. I remember one time during an introductory ice breaker we were asked to give a little information about how we arrived at our present geographical location. He started to tell the story of his journey and I, for one, didn't look at him quite the same from that point on.

### **Called, Sanctified, Preserved**

It is worth noting in this simple greeting that our inclusion in what we call the church or Christian faith was an orchestrated event. We are not here by virtue of something as mundane as our own decision making power. The Lord called us and set us apart as the specific and unique objects of His tender affection. And our ability to persevere in the faith in which we stand is by the preserving power of Christ Himself who protects us against our own nature and the enemy of our souls.

### **Mercy, Peace, Love**

**“Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you” (Jude 1:2).**

Here we read of three things Jude desires his readers to have in abundance. Love can be referring to the love of God or men or both. Increasing measures of love should be an earmark for the truly faithful. Peace should also be magnified. If our primary concern is the good pleasure of our Father in heaven, then the peace established by Christ should always been filling our hearts with a greater sense of tranquillity. But Jude's first desire is that we more fully, or continually, know God's mercy.

### **Do You Need Mercy?**

There is a brand of Christian faith rearing its ugly head today which asserts that Christians need not continue to ask for God's forgiveness since He has already forgiven

us. Do you not need God's mercy today? His mercies are new every morning for our sins are new every night. We are to live in a continual state of needing and enjoying His mercy.

## II. Creepers

**“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3).**

### Openness

Here we see pastoral passion. There are very few things that stimulate a pastor to action as much as the awareness of wolves among the sheep. Recently a heretical view of the sovereignty of God is making progress among evangelicals. It is called the “openness” view or “open” view. In short, it is a view which asserts that God takes risks and that He doesn't know, for sure, what the future holds, even though He has a pretty good idea.

### Diligent, Necessary

My point in bringing this up is because this was first introduced to me in a seminary class I recently attended. I got home from the class at 11:15 PM and staggered into bed. I was perusing some reading material with the intentions of merely tiring my eyes a bit. I happened upon a copy of a Modern Reformation magazine which had an interview with Greg Boyd, a proponent of this “open” view of God. My heart raced as I read the entire interview as well as an accompanying book review on the same subject. As a pastor I am responsible to God to protect those under my care. When Jude became aware of predators among the people of God he found it necessary to write.

### Expanding or Denying?

There is a message that was once for all delivered to the saints. It is contained in the scriptures. Those who seek to expand their faith with a starting point outside of the scriptures are not growing in faith but rather denying the faith. As John indicates in 2 John 2:9,10 they are operating outside the boundaries of faith.

**“For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 1:4).**

## **High Spirituality**

Spirituality is at an all-time high. I recently did a memorial service. As I had discussions with people prior to the service I found that virtually every person I spoke with was into spiritual things. Consequently I began my message by proclaiming that all spirits aren't good.

## **Lacking Discernment**

Along these lines I have found that Christians are hesitant to denounce a teaching that comes from a really nice or apparently pious man. In the verse before us one must wonder how these men crept in unnoticed. They likely had a working knowledge of the scriptures. They may have been warm, endearing individuals. Lack of discernment is a plague the church faces in every generation. The church will always have people creeping into positions of prominence.

## **No Breaking God's Providence**

Although there is some debate as to whom was marked out for condemnation. I take it to mean the people Jude is about to describe. And without chasing this rabbit too far down the trail, I take comfort in knowing that these creepers are not autonomous and have no genuine independence to do damage beyond the counsel of God. The ne'er-do-wells who enter my life and ministry have not broken the borders of my Father's providential care. My soul is comforted in this "too high" knowledge.

## **Lewdness**

These creepers turn the grace of God into lewdness-unbridled lust or shamelessness. They no doubt have, and promote, a view of salvation that makes no demands of repentance. As Michael Green says, "...men accepted the indicative of pardon and forgot the imperative of holiness."<sup>1</sup> Jude makes it quite clear that in so doing they are denying the Lordship of God and His Son which is a denial of God Himself.

## **III. Three Examples of Apostacy**

**"But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe" (Jude 1:5).**

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Green, *Second Peter and Jude*, (Eerdmans, 1998), p. 175.

## **False Assurance**

I often speak against the method of assurance presented at modern crusades and attached to the tail end of evangelistic tracts. They give people the sense that simply by praying the prayer or coming forward or performing some singular religious activity, that their souls are safe for eternity. “Having prayed this prayer, allow me to assure you that Jesus will never leave you nor forsake you” is often the quote. And although I think assurance is a good thing—something toward which we should all work, Jude’s presentation seems at odds with the popular view.

## **Delivered From Egypt**

If we’re going to follow the Old Testament foreshadows of the New Testament realities, we see that deliverance from Egypt is a type of being delivered from the slavery of sin. Yet later they were found to be unbelievers and were destroyed. There are many verses like these (generally used by Arminians) which seems to indicate the possibility of falling from grace. But this only exists by a lacking of understanding the idea of being one of God’s covenant people.

## **Understanding the Covenant**

In the old covenant you were one of God’s covenant people by virtue of your citizenship in the nation of Israel. If the nation won, you won. If the nation was judged, you were judged, etc. Some of God’s covenant people were saved, others weren’t. Jacob and Esau both had the sign of the covenant. In the new covenant, we are considered to be one of God’s covenant people by virtue of our inclusion in the church. But of course, similar to the nation of Israel, there are baptized members of the Christian church who aren’t saved. There are tares among the wheat.

These tares, as we read in Matthew 13 may receive the word of God with joy and grow rapidly. But eventually the riches or thorns will get to them and their false faith is revealed (see 1 John 2:19). Jude’s point here is to continue in the faith that was delivered and not to veer. Deliverance from slavery does not always guarantee deliverance to Canaan.

## **Angels**

**“And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day” (Jude 1:6).**

## **Locals**

And if the security of the unfaithful Israelite is called into question—having enjoyed God’s favor and temporal deliverance from the evil Pharaoh—how much more the security of angels? We have in our society a type of person called a “local”. He may be a surfer, or a volleyball player or a skateboarder, etc. The local spends so much time in a certain place that he begins to think it actually belongs to him—like a house guest who starts getting very comfortable visiting the refrigerator. If God cast out impious angels, we must exercise due diligence in our faith, to enjoy the assurance of the hope of glory.

## **Sodom**

**“...as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 1:7).**

## **Why Sodom?**

Finally Jude gives the example of Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them. One might wonder why Jude would go from Israel (the apple of God’s eye) to angels (who are a little higher than man, Hebrews 2:7) to a detestable and sexually perverse city that few find there to be a difficulty in understanding a just judgment. But it seems to be the very point. Apart from persevering in the faith, once for all delivered to the saints, man is hopelessly damned.

## **Innovation**

Innovation is great when it comes to computers and telecommunication. But Jude is warning us against the innovative doctrines and methods of men who creep into the church. Interesting how impossible it is for modern religious innovators to find enough uniformed agreement in their particular pet theories to construct ecumenical counsels and confessions. Their successes are dependent upon their own charismatic personalities and ability to market themselves.

I sit comfortably in the chair of historic and ecumenical confessions as I read the holy text. And although my ultimate standard is the text and not the chair, I find that I seldom need to adjust the cushions. However when I sit in the chair of innovators I can find little comfort with the scriptures in my hands.

## Questions for Study

1. According to verse one of Jude, what do we know about why we are in the faith?
2. Do Christians continually need the mercy of God? Why?
3. Why was Jude so passionate about writing?
4. What is meant by “once for all delivered to the saints” in verse three?
5. Is spirituality always good? Why or why not?
6. Are those who make trouble in the church, or elsewhere, operating outside of God’s providence?
7. What were these creepers promoting in the church?
8. What is lewdness?
9. What are Jude’s three examples of apostacy? Why do you suppose he uses these examples?
10. Can someone be delivered yet not saved? How?
11. Discuss innovative theology?