

# 119

## MINISTRIES

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### **Testing the Book of Enoch**

Often we’re asked about our position on some of the books that are not included in the standard 66 books of the Bible. How should we approach these extra-biblical books? Are there additional books that should be considered inspired by God and on the same level as the rest of the books contained in what we call “Scripture”?

We’ve already looked at a couple of these books, such as the Book of Jubilees and the Book of Jasher. You can learn more about our position on those particular books by watching our teachings, [Testing the Book of Jubilees](#) and [Testing the Book of Jasher](#).

In this teaching, we will be looking at arguably the most popular of these extra-biblical books—the Book of Enoch. This is a fascinating book for many reasons that we will get into, but the most significant reason is that the early followers of Yeshua were aware of these writings.

Before we dive in, it’s important to clarify what we mean by the “Book of Enoch” since there are actually three different books by that name. Scholars have named these books 1 Enoch, 2 Enoch, and 3 Enoch to differentiate them from each other. 1 Enoch, which is the proper title for the book, is typically what everyone is referring to when they talk about the “Book of Enoch.”

To give some basic information about these other two books before we move on to the main topic, here is what the Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary has to say concerning 2 Enoch:

“The origins of 2 Enoch are unknown. Research has not reached any consensus about the time, place, or contents of its first published form. The options range from Charles’ theory that the longer recension was written by an Alexandria Jew in the 1<sup>st</sup> century through belief that it was a Christian rewrite of 1 Enoch, probably in Greek, made anywhere from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. (in Syria?) to the 10<sup>th</sup> (in Byzantium), up to the denial that it is anything more than a home-grown product of Slavic religious culture.”

*-Francis I. Andersen, “Enoch, Second Book Of,” Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*

In regard to 3 Enoch, The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary states that it is:

“A late Jewish apocalypse in Hebrew, probably compiled in the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. in Babylonia.”

-Philip S. Alexander, “*Enoch, Third Book Of*,” *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*

While interesting on their own, 2 & 3 Enoch are not really relevant to our current study. Like we said, when people talk about “the Book of Enoch,” typically they are referring to 1 Enoch. The content of 1 Enoch is what most people are familiar with and curious about. Moreover, the writings that make up 1 Enoch are what the early believers in Yeshua were familiar with.

So with that said, who was Enoch? What is the Book of Enoch? What was the significance of this book to the early followers of Yeshua? What is the significance of this book to believers today? What can we learn from it—if anything?

Let’s begin with that first question: Who was Enoch?

We don’t have a lot of information on Enoch, but here is what we know from Scripture:

- He was the great-great-great-great-grandson of Adam and the great-grandfather of Noah (Genesis 5:18-29).
- He “walked faithfully with God” and then was mysteriously taken away by God (Genesis 5:22-24).

#### **Genesis 5:22-24**

*Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.*

- The author of Hebrews elaborates on this event, saying that Enoch did not experience death (Hebrews 11:5). Although, eventually, he did die later (Hebrews 11:13).
- He was known as a man of faith who lived a life pleasing to God (Hebrews 11:5).
- Most importantly, in regards to our study, ***he was NOT the author of the Book of Enoch.***

That last point might shock those who haven’t really studied this topic. But it’s a simple fact that the Enoch of the Bible *could not* have been the author of what we call the Book of Enoch. Why? Well there are a number of reasons.

First, the Book of Enoch contains anachronisms. For instance, the Book of Enoch makes clear use of biblical passages from the prophets like Isaiah, Zechariah, and Ezekiel, which were obviously written long after Enoch’s time. Places like Mount Sinai are even mentioned by name (1 Enoch 1:4), which of course the patriarch Enoch would have had no knowledge of.

Second, scholars are able to determine the historical setting and date of the Enochic texts by studying the grammar, syntax, and doctrinal content of those writings in light of other historical data. Enochic

scholar, George W. E. Nickelsburg, writes:

The Enochic use of pagan mythological motifs and its preachments against Gentile oppression are clear marks of this text's setting **in the Hellenistic world** and of its complex interaction with the events and culture of that world.

*-George W. E. Nickelsburg, "Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah," p. 53*

So that brings us to our second question. If the book of Enoch is not some special revelation written by the patriarch Enoch himself, what is it?

The Book of Enoch is what's known as "pseudepigrapha," which means that it is a falsely attributed text. That is to say, it is a text whose claimed author is not the true author. The true author of the text attributed the work to a figure of the past—in this case, the patriarch Enoch. These types of pseudepigraphal works were very common between 200 BCE to 200 CE.

Now, the fact that a book is pseudepigraphal does not mean that it is worthless. Just the opposite in fact! Unlike the modern "Book of Jasher" that's touted by some to be the lost biblical [Book of Jasher](#)—again, see our teaching on the subject—the pseudepigraphal literature is actually relevant to getting a better understanding of the Bible.

When understood and appreciated for what it is, the pseudepigrapha can be very helpful in gaining a fuller understanding of first century Judaism and the historical context of the New Testament. These writings are a treasure trove of primary sources that give us a window into the social history, ideas, and internal debates between the differing expressions of Jewish faith of that period.

The Book of Enoch was influential in the Second Temple period, and it's been suggested that some New Testament authors were perhaps even influenced by the content of these writings. We'll talk more about how significant this book was to the early followers of Yeshua a little later. For now, let's give a summary of the Book of Enoch.

As we already mentioned, it is part of the pseudepigraphal literature. According to scholars, it was written by numerous authors and pieced together over the last few centuries BCE. Nickelsburg writes:

1 Enoch is a collection of apocalyptic (revelatory) texts that were composed between the late fourth century B.C.E and the turn of the era. The size of the collection, the diversity of its contents, and its many implications for the study of ancient Judaism and Christian origins make it arguably the most important Jewish writing that has survived from the Greco-Roman period.

*- George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, "1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation," p. vii*

The Book of Enoch was originally written in Aramaic, but the entire collection of the writings is preserved in only late manuscripts written in an ancient Ethiopic language known as Ge'ez, which were translated from a Greek translation of Aramaic originals. Aside from those late Ethiopic manuscripts, we have only parts of the collection in earlier Greek and Aramaic fragments. Nickelsburg explains:

The components of 1 Enoch were composed in Aramaic and then translated into Greek, and from Greek into ancient Ethiopic (Ge'ez). The entire collection is extant only in manuscripts of the

Ethiopic Bible, of which this text is a part. Approximately ninety such manuscripts from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries are available to scholars in the West [...] Roughly twenty-five percent of 1 Enoch has survived in two Greek manuscripts from the fourth and fifth/sixth centuries (chaps 1:1-32:6; 97:6-107:3) and a few fragments of other parts. Eleven manuscripts from Qumran contain substantial as well as tiny fragments of the Aramaic of parts of chapters 1-36, 72-82, 85-90, and 91-107. A fragment of a sixth/seventh-century Coptic manuscript (93:3-8), an extract in a ninth-century Latin manuscript (106:1-18), and a twelfth-century Syriac excerpt (6:1-6) have also survived.

- *George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, "1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation," p. 13*

To go on a quick rabbit trail, it's worth mentioning that the translations of the Book of Enoch we have today are derived primarily from these late Ethiopic manuscripts from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries CE. While scholars and translators consult the few fragments from earlier Greek and Aramaic manuscripts, they don't really have a lot to work with.

This ought to impact how much weight we put on the version of the Book of Enoch we have today when considering how it might fit into the first century. That is to say, we should proceed with caution, and not blindly assume, that the version of Enoch we have today is a 100% accurate representation of the version of Enoch they had in the first century.

For instance, if a significant chunk of Enoch has been preserved only in manuscripts from the fifteenth century or later, we cannot be confident that the content contained in those later manuscripts were not edited or added to much later than the first century.

Contrast this with the New Testament, which has nearly 6,000 complete Greek manuscripts that have been catalogued in addition to over 20,000 ancient translations in other languages, which makes it by far the most attested literature of the ancient world. Moreover, many of the New Testament manuscripts are quite early. Scholar and theologian, Dr. Matt Waymeyer, explains:

We currently possess as many as a dozen manuscripts from the second century, 64 from the third century, and 48 from the fourth century, for a total of 124 manuscripts within 300 years of the composition of the New Testament. The earliest New Testament fragment is separated from the original by only 50 years; the earliest books are separated by only 100 years; and the earliest complete New Testament is separated by only 225 years. By way of comparison, only ten manuscripts of Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* exist (the earliest dating 1,300 years after Thucydides); only eight manuscripts of Herodotus' *History* exist (the earliest dating 1,300 years after Herodotus); and only two manuscripts of Tacitus' *Histories and Annals* exist (the earliest dating 700 years after Tacitus). The unparalleled number and early date of the biblical manuscripts makes it clear that the New Testament is easily the most remarkably preserved book of the ancient world.

-*Matt Waymeyer, "Can We Trust the New Testament Text?" [www.expositors.org](http://www.expositors.org).*

The incredible abundance of New Testament manuscripts that we have, some going back very early, is extremely valuable in textual criticism—that is, the process of ascertaining the original wording of a text. The fewer the manuscripts and the later the dates of those manuscripts, the more difficult it is to be confident that we've reconstructed the original.

It's worth keeping that in mind as we read modern translations of the Book of Enoch. Unfortunately, much of it is derived from only a limited amount of manuscripts, which are not only translations of translations, but also over a thousand years separated from the original.

Moving forward, the actual content of the Book of Enoch is composed of 108 chapters that are divided into 5 sections followed by two short appendices. Nickelsburg summarizes the teaching of the Book of Enoch as such:

The sections represent developing stages of the Enochic tradition, each one building on the earlier ones—though not in the order in which they presently stand in the collection. Overall they express a common worldview that characterizes this present world and age as evil and unjust and in need of divine adjudication and renewal. With the possible exception of the Book of the Luminaries, they focus on the common concern and expectation that a coming divine judgment will eradicate evil and injustice from the earth and will return the world to God's created intention. Their authority lies in their claim that they transmit divine revelation, which the patriarch Enoch received in primordial times (Gen 5:21-24) and which is made public in the last times to constitute the eschatological community of the chosen.

*-George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, "1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation," p. 1*

So basically, the authors of this composite work claim to have received this special revelation from the patriarch Enoch. As we'll learn a little later, it's taught that Enoch ascended into heaven and was shown these heavenly secrets. He then descended from heaven to transmit this revelation, which is now written in the Book of Enoch.

The sectarian community that wrote and followed these teachings claims that this revelation was made public in their time, long after the patriarch Enoch. Why? So that they could establish an end-times community and proclaim these special teachings. The goal was to prepare the "righteous chosen," i.e. the sectarian community who followed these teachings, for God's soon-coming judgment that they believed was upon them. Here's what the introduction in the first verse of the Book of Enoch says:

The words of the blessing with which Enoch blessed the righteous chosen who will be present on the day of tribulation, to remove all the enemies; and the righteous will be saved.

*-1 Enoch 1:1, George W.E. Nickelsburg & James C. VanderKam, "1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation," pp. 19*

Perhaps a good modern analogy to the Book of Enoch would be the Book of Mormon. According to Mormonism, Joseph Smith claimed that an angel by the name of Moroni visited him and directed him to find golden plates containing special revelation from God, which he then translated into the Book of Mormon. The sectarian community that developed from these teachings believes to this day that they are part of an end-times community—the Latter-Day Saints—commissioned with the task of proclaiming the teachings of Mormonism.

The difference is that the writers of the Book of Enoch claim to have received their revelation from an actual biblical character—the patriarch Enoch. Joseph Smith claims that a character, Moroni, which is only revealed in the Mormon literature, was the one who directed him to the Mormon revelation. In

either case, both books claim special revelation that has been made public to a chosen few in order to establish an end-times community around particular doctrines.

Let's move forward. Now we're going to give a summary of each section of the Book of Enoch.

## **The Book of the Watchers (1 Enoch 1-36)**

This section is believed to have been composed in the third century BCE. It is primarily an elaborate interpretation of Genesis 6. It tells the story of the rebellion of angels, who are called "Watchers," which led to God judging the earth by sending the flood in Genesis 6.

According to the narrative, fallen angels lusted after women on earth, took them as wives, and had children who became giants. The fallen angels then teach humans about magic and how to make weapons and jewelry, promoting violence and promiscuity among the people of the earth:

When the sons of men had multiplied, in those days, beautiful and comely daughters were born to them. And the watchers, the sons of heaven, saw them and desired them. And they said to one another, "Come, let us choose for ourselves wives from the daughters of men, and let us beget children for ourselves" [...] And they began to go in to them, and to defile themselves through them, and to teach them sorcery and charms, and to reveal to them the cutting of roots and plants. And they conceived from them and bore to them great giants.

*-1 Enoch 6:1-2; 7:1-2, George W.E. Nickelsburg & James C. VanderKam, "1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation," pp. 23-24*

As we continue through the story, we see that God commands the archangel, Michael, to capture the fallen angels and bind them for seventy generations, after which they'll be judged:

And to Michael he said, "Go, Michael, bind Shemihazah and the others with him, who have mated with the daughters of men, so that they were defiled by them in their uncleanness. And when their sons perish and they see the destruction of their beloved ones, bind them for seventy generations in the valleys of the earth, until the day of their judgment and consummation, until the everlasting judgment is consummated.

*-1 Enoch 10:11-12, George W.E. Nickelsburg & James C. VanderKam, "1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation," p. 29*

As the narrative continues, we read about how Enoch had ascended into heaven. There, the angels tell him that he must go proclaim God's judgment against the fallen angels who had married human women (1 Enoch 12:1-6). So Enoch goes to speak to the fallen angels, and they ask him to write a petition on their behalf, pleading for mercy and that God would spare them.

Enoch agrees to write the petition for them. As he's reciting the petition he had just written, he falls asleep and receives a vision from God (1 Enoch 13:4-8). In the vision, Enoch goes before the throne of YHWH, and He tells him to tell the fallen angels that He has denied their petition (1 Enoch 14:4-7). God also told them that their children, the giants, would become evil spirits on earth:

And the spirits of the giants lead astray, do violence, make desolate, and attack and wrestle and hurl upon the earth and cause illnesses. They eat nothing, but abstain from food and are thirsty

and smite. These spirits (will) rise up against the sons of men and against the women, for they have come forth from them.

*-1 Enoch 15:11-12, George W.E. Nickelsburg & James C. VanderKam, "1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation," p. 37*

The rest of the Book of the Watchers tells how Enoch is then accompanied by interpreting angels and taken on a journey where heavenly secrets are revealed to him. Chapter 22 describes what the afterlife is supposedly like and where the souls of the dead go, which is a mountain with four hollow chambers. Depending on how righteous or wicked a person was during their lifetime will determine which chamber their soul will gather to.

On this journey, Enoch is also taken to the mountain of God and the Tree of Life in a New Jerusalem as well as to primordial Eden where he is shown the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The section concludes with Enoch's journey to the ends of the earth where he encounters great beasts, observes gates in the heavens from which the stars emerge, and sees other gates that serve as the sources of rain and wind on the earth.

## **The Book of Parables (37-71)**

This section is believed to have been composed in the first century BCE. It consists of three parables that were allegedly given to Enoch. In the first parable, he's shown more heavenly secrets such as how the elements of the weather on earth originate in the heavens.

In the second parable, Enoch is shown how a "Chosen One" will sit on a throne of glory and judge the deeds of the wicked people who have rejected God. Afterward, he will come to earth to dwell with the righteous people (1 Enoch 45:3-6).

Then, according to chapter 46, Enoch sees a figure referred to as the "Son of Man." An angel explains to Enoch that this Son of Man reveals secret treasures to the righteous people of the Lord:

And I asked the angel of peace, who went with me and showed me all the hidden things, about that son of man—who he was and whence he was (and) why he went with the Head of Days. And he answered me and said to me, "This is the son of man who has righteousness, and righteousness dwells with him. And all the treasuries of what is hidden he will reveal; For the Lord of Spirits has chosen him, and his lot has prevailed through truth in the presence of the Lord of Spirits forever.

*-1 Enoch 46:2-3, George W.E. Nickelsburg & James C. VanderKam, "1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation," pp. 59-60*

It's apparent from the text that the titles "Chosen One" and "Son of Man" both refer to this same end times figure.

The Book of Parables goes on to describe how this Son of Man/Chosen One will destroy sinners and strike down kings and rulers because they do not praise God (1 Enoch 46:4-5). It says that he was named before the world was created and that he will be a light to the nations (1 Enoch 48:3-4). He will be worshipped by "all who dwell on the earth" (1 Enoch 48:5). And in his name, the righteous will have salvation:

And the wisdom of the Lord of Spirits has revealed him to the holy and the righteous; for he has preserved the lot of the righteous. For they have hated and despised this age of unrighteousness; Indeed, all its deeds and its ways they have hated in the name of the Lord of Spirits. For in his name they are saved, and he is the vindicator of their lives.

*-1 Enoch 48:7, George W.E. Nickelsburg & James C. VanderKam, "1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation," p. 62*

And again, the Book of the Parables goes on to describe that this Chosen One/Son of Man will sit on God's throne and judge between the righteous and wicked:

In those days, the earth will give back what has been entrusted to it, and Sheol will give back what has been entrusted to it, and destruction will restore what it owes. For in those days, my Chosen One will arise and choose the righteous and holy from among them, for the day on which they will be saved has drawn near. And the Chosen One, in those days, will sit upon my throne, and all the secrets of wisdom will go forth from the counsel of his mouth, for the Lord of Spirits has given (them) to him and glorified him.

*-1 Enoch 51:1-3, George W.E. Nickelsburg & James C. VanderKam, "1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation," p. 65*

Several chapters later, we read a concluding summary of this end-times judgment. The Son of Man is revealed to the chosen community of righteous believers. He sits on his throne, destroys the wicked, and ushers in an era of peace:

And they had great joy, and they blessed and glorified and exalted, because the name of that Son of Man had been revealed to them. And he sat on the throne of his glory, and the whole judgment was given to the Son of Man, and he will make sinners vanish and perish from the face of the earth. And those who led the world astray will be bound in chains, and in the assembly place of their destruction they will be shut up; and all their works will vanish from the face of the earth, And from then on there will be nothing that is corruptible; for that Son of Man has appeared. And he has sat down on the throne of his glory, and all evil will vanish from his presence. And the word of that Son of Man will go forth and will prevail in the presence of the Lord of Spirits. This is the third parable of Enoch.

*-1 Enoch 69:26-29, George W.E. Nickelsburg & James C. VanderKam, "1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation," pp. 91-92*

So, the author of this the Book of Parables is clearly drawing upon Messianic prophecies from the TANAKH to describe this Chosen One/Son of Man figure.

At the end of the Book of Parables, Enoch is taken up again to heaven in the presence of the angels and the Lord of Spirits (1 Enoch 71:1-2). Then Michael the archangel reveals to Enoch more heavenly secrets (1 Enoch 71:3-4). Finally, Enoch is taken to the "heaven of heavens" where he sees a fiery heavenly palace. There, Enoch is greeted by God, the four archangels, and innumerable other angels. Surprisingly, Enoch is greeted *as* this Son of Man figure:

And the Head of Days came with Michael and Raphael and Gabriel and Phanuel, and thousands and tens of thousands of angels without number. And he came to me and greeted me with his



voice and said to me, “You (are) that Son of Man who was born for righteousness, and righteousness dwells on you, and the righteousness of the Head of Days will not forsake you.”

*-1 Enoch 71:13-14, George W.E. Nickelsburg & James C. VanderKam, “1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation,” p. 95*

We will unpack the significance of Enoch being identified as this Son of Man figure a little later. For now, let’s continue.

## **The Book of the Luminaries (72-82)**

This section of the Book of Enoch is believed to have been composed in the third century BCE, and is likely the earliest of the Enochic texts. It describes Enoch’s journey through the heavens with the guidance of the interpreting angel Uriel. This section is focused almost exclusively on explaining the astronomical laws governing the solar calendar that was favored by the sectarian community who produced and followed the Book of Enoch. This calendar was made up of 364 days—12 months of 30 days each with one extra day in the third, sixth, ninth, and twelfth months.

We’ll unpack the implications of this section of Enoch as it relates to us as believers a little later.

## **The Dream Visions (83-90)**

This section of the Book of Enoch is believed to have been composed in the second century BCE. In this section, Enoch tells his son Methuselah about two dreams concerning future events. The first dream is of the world’s destruction in the Flood of Noah (1 Enoch 83-84). The second dream is an allegorical telling of the history of humanity from Adam to the final judgment, which has come to be known as the “Animal Apocalypse.” In the allegory humans are represented as animals, the fallen angels are represented as fallen stars, and the archangels are represented as human beings. The dream concludes with a final judgment and God ushering in a new world of peace.

## **The Epistle of Enoch (91-105)**

This section is believed to have been composed in the second century BCE. It is an exhortation from Enoch to his sons to remain righteous in their wicked generation. He then lists a series of woes against the wicked because they oppress the righteous. The section concludes with a reference to Enoch’s books being given to the righteous during the end times.

## **The Birth of Noah (106-107)**

This section details the miraculous birth of Noah. When Noah was born, his face and hair are said to glow white. He immediately stands up from the hands of the midwife and praises the Lord (1 Enoch 106:1-3).

This frightens Noah’s father, Lamech, who assumes that Noah must be a child of one of the fallen angels. So he begs his father Methuselah to speak with Enoch to learn the truth (1 Enoch 106:4-7). Enoch assures Methuselah that Noah is in fact Lamech’s son, and that Noah is just super holy, hence his glowing, and that he’s called to preserve the human race (1 Enoch 106:13-19).

## Another Book by Enoch (108)

This final section of the book of Enoch is an additional exhortation from Enoch to his son Methuselah regarding God's judgment in the end days. Nickelsburg writes:

This “other book that Enoch wrote” is actually a summarizing and interpretive conclusion to the corpus, which exhorts the righteous who live “in the end of days” to endure in their expectation because the judgment will soon vindicate them and eradicate sin and the sinners who have troubled and oppressed them.

-George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, “*1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation*,” pp. 12-13

## What Should We Think About the Book of Enoch?

So now that we've given a summary of the content in the Book of Enoch, we can move on to discuss what significance this book might have held to the early followers of Yeshua. And after that we can explore what ways the Book of Enoch is useful, and not useful, to us today.

The first question we'll look at is the question of canonicity. What is believed about the Book of Enoch's inspiration and authority? Today, only the Ethiopian Church, and—interestingly enough—the Mormon religion, consider the Enochic writings to be authoritative. Aside from that, most of Christianity has rejected the Book of Enoch as inspired or authoritative, which is why it isn't included in the Bible.

Historically, the writings that make up the Book of Enoch were never considered to be inspired in any universal way. While the writings were revered, especially among some sectarian Jewish communities, they were never considered to be part of “Scripture.”

For instance, the books that make up the *TANAKH* are referred to in the New Testament and other Second Temple era Jewish literature as the *Torah*, *Nevi'im*, and *Ketuvim*—that is, the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms. One place we see a reference to this threefold designation of the Scriptures is in the gospel of Luke:

### Luke 24:44-45

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in **the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms** must be fulfilled. Then He opened their minds to understand **the Scriptures**.”

But this threefold designation was used to define the canon of Scripture long before the New Testament times. For instance, Ben Sira, the author of the Apocryphal book, the Wisdom of Sirach, or Ecclesiasticus, had a grandson who translated his grandfather's writings into Greek around 130 BCE. This translator wrote his own prologue to the translation, which makes reference to the three parts of the Old Testament canon.

In regard to this prologue, Scholar Roger T. Beckwith writes:

It appears, then, that for this writer there are three groups of books which have a unique authority, and that his grandfather wrote only after gaining great familiarity with them, **as their**

**interpreter not as their rival. The translator explicitly distinguishes ‘these things’ (i.e. Ecclesiasticus, or uncanonical Hebrew compositions such as Ecclesiasticus) from ‘the Law itself and the Prophecies and the rest of the Books’ [...]** And not only does he state that in his own day there was this threefold canon, distinguished from all other writings, in which even the Hagiographa formed a closed collection of old books, but he implies that such was the case in his grandfather’s time also.

*-Roger T. Beckwith, “The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church” p. 111*

You’ll notice that by the time of around 130 BCE when this prologue was written, there was already an idea of a “closed” canon of Scripture, which was uniquely sacred and distinct from any additional writings such as the apocryphal writings. And this idea of a closed canon was apparently affirmed even earlier in Ben Sira’s time, according to his grandson.

As far as we know there is no manuscript or historical evidence indicating that the Enochic writings were ever accepted as part of this threefold canon of “Scripture.” Neither the Greek Septuagint nor the Hebrew Masoretic texts included the Enochic writings in their sets.

Moreover, the first century Jewish historian Josephus wrote that there was already a defined Hebrew canon in his time. Here’s a passage from “Against Apion,” which was written by Josephus in the 90’s CE:

Our books, those which are justly believed, are only 22, and contain the record of all time. Of these, five are the books of Moses, comprising the laws and the traditional history from the birth of man down to Moses’s death. This period falls only a little short of 3,000 years. From the death of Moses down to Artaxerxes who followed Xerxes the king of Persia, the prophets after Moses wrote the events of their own times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God and precepts for the conduct of human life. From Artaxerxes down to our own time, the complete history has been written, but has not been deemed worthy of like trust with the earlier records, because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets. We have given practical proof of our reverence for our own Scriptures. For, although such long ages have now passed, no one has ventured to add, or to remove, or to alter anything, and it is an instinct with every Jew, from the day of his birth, to regard them as the decrees of God, to abide by them, and (if need be) cheerfully to die for them.

*-Josephus, Against Apion 1.7f., or 1. 37-43; Thackeray’s translation, corrected.*

You’ll notice that Josephus divides Scriptures into three categories: the five books of Moses, the Books of the prophets after Moses, and the books of hymns to God and precepts for the conduct of human life. This of course is basically the same threefold designation of the Scriptures that we see in the gospels and other early Jewish literature.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about this passage is that Josephus limits these inspired books to a certain number—twenty-two. This number, of course, is different than the number of books we have in our current Old Testament canon, which is thirty-nine books. But that’s because Josephus’ canon combined certain books that are separated in our current canon. For instance, Lamentations was likely attached to Jeremiah, Ruth with Judges, and so on.

The point, however, is that this is significant evidence from a primary source that by the 90’s CE, there

were a specific number of books that were already considered to be uniquely authoritative. And, according to Josephus, all Jews accepted this. While there is some debate over which books would have been included or excluded from Josephus' list, no scholar believes that *any* book that's not already part of the Old Testament canon we have today would have been part of this first century canon.

But wait! There's more! Even the Qumran community, which certainly revered the Book of Enoch, shockingly did not include it in their canon of Scripture either.

To unpack all of the evidence is beyond the scope of this teaching. But Roger T. Beckwith presents the evidence that proves this to be the case in his massive scholarly work, "The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church," specifically in pages 358-366

To summarize only a few of his arguments:

1) In their own writings, the Qumran community didn't treat the pseudepigrapha the same way they treated Scripture. Beckwith writes:

Though the Qumran literature (like other Jewish literature of its period) quotes the canonical Scriptures with great frequency, and uses conventional formulas for the purpose, it only rarely quotes the Essene pseudepigrapha, never using such formulas or giving any other clear indication that the works quoted were of prophetic or canonical authority.

*-Roger T. Beckwith, "The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church," p. 364*

2) According to historical evidence, the Qumran community acknowledged the threefold canon of Scripture, and they are recorded as grouping their pseudepigrapha in a separate appendix to the canon, indicating that these additional writings were not part of the canon as they saw it. Beckwith writes:

The use by the Therapeutae or the Essenes of the standard three divisions of the canon, and of one of the standard counts of the canonical books, and their grouping of their own pseudepigrapha in a separate appendix, imply that the three sections and the standard count were already agreed and settled among the Jews before the Essenes separated from the rest about 152 BC. Three of the books of 1 Enoch had been written by that time, but the Essenes had evidently not attempted to include them in any of the three sections of the canon, or to number them in the count of the canonical books, since they did nothing of the kind after the separation, either with these pseudepigrapha or subsequent pseudepigrapha.

*-Roger T. Beckwith, "The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church," p. 365*

3) The Qumran community, which likely emerged from the very community that produced the Enochic writings, viewed some of the pseudepigrapha like Enoch as divinely revealed, but not on the same level as the Scriptures themselves. They viewed it as merely the correct *interpretation* of the Scriptures. Beckwith writes:

It is now clear that the main purpose of some of the pseudepigrapha, lately identified as Essene or proto-Essene, was to expound and maintain the Essene interpretation of the Pentateuch, over against rival interpretations. This is particularly clear in the case of the newly-discovered Qumran Temple Scroll, but it also applies to the Astronomical Book in 1 Enoch (1 En. 72-82), to Jubilees and to an extensive section of the Aramaic Testament of Levi (verses 13-57, Charles's

text) [...] If this is true, it means that the Essenes were not really meaning to add to Old Testament prophecy, any more than to Old Testament law. As regards the Pentateuch, what their pseudonymous legal writings offered was an interpretation of it—a revealed interpretation, certainly, but not more than an interpretation. As regards Old Testament prophecy, what their pseudonymous apocalyptic writings offered was again an interpretation of it—supplemented perhaps, but only from natural sources, like arithmetic and astrology, not from supernatural. This interpretation, too, was evidently held to be a revealed interpretation, but an interpretation was all that it aimed to be.

-Roger T. Beckwith, *“The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church,”* p. 360, 362

So historically we see that the Book of Enoch has never been considered “Scripture” in the Jewish world, not even among the Qumran community, which certainly held the Enochic writings in high regard.

The Qumran community’s view on the Book of Enoch could perhaps be compared to some rabbinic views of the oral Torah. Orthodox Judaism claims, for instance, that at least portions of the oral Torah were given to Moses on Mount Sinai and passed down from generation to generation. The oral Torah is therefore considered to have a divine authority in Orthodox Judaism, but no Jew thinks of the oral Torah as being the same as Scripture—it’s just the revealed *interpretation* of Scripture.

In the same way, the Qumran community, which in all likelihood was connected to the very community that produced the Enochic writings, claimed that the Enochic writings were divinely revealed to the patriarch Enoch. This claim to divine authority was possibly an attempt to rival other Jewish communities who claimed that their own traditions and interpretations had divine authority. It’s kind of like saying, “Oh you say your revelation goes back to Moses, huh? Well *ours* goes all the way back to Enoch!” In either case, there was a distinction between Scripture and the pseudepigrapha in the minds of the Qumran community, even though they valued the pseudepigrapha as divinely revealed.

What can we infer from this? It seems clear that the idea that the Book of Enoch ought to be part of the Bible is seriously lacking historical support. Not even the sectarian communities that produced and followed these writings considered them to be on the same level of Scripture. Therefore, why should *we* view the Book of Enoch as Scripture when not even those sectarian communities intended it to be viewed that way?

But what about the early believers in Yeshua? What did they think of the Book of Enoch? And didn’t Jude quote Enoch in the New Testament? Wouldn’t that indicate that these writings had some divine authority? Let’s look at the passage from Jude:

#### **Jude 14-15**

It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”

Now here is the passage from the Book of Enoch that Jude is said to be quoting:

Look, he comes with the myriads of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all, and to destroy all the wicked, and to convict all humanity for all the wicked deeds that they have done, and the

proud and hard words that wicked sinners spoke against him.

*--1 Enoch 1:9, George W.E. Nickelsburg & James C. VanderKam, "1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation," p. 20*

There are a couple of things to point out here. First, some scholars insist that Jude was in fact quoting directly from the Book of Enoch. But other scholars dispute this.

It's pointed out, for example, that Jude never mentions a book or scroll of Enoch. He doesn't mention what is written, only what is said, or what Enoch said. So rather than assuming that Jude quoted Enoch, scholars argue that Jude and the Book of the Enoch are actually referencing the same oral tradition. In other words, Jude wasn't relying on the Enochic writings for this saying of Enoch. Jude and the author of that particular passage in the Book of Enoch were perhaps both relying on the widely held tradition of what the actual Enoch said.

However, even if Jude did directly quote from the Book of Enoch, there's still no reason to suggest that the Book of Enoch is inspired or should be part of the Bible. The biblical authors quoted plenty of material that nobody would consider sacred or inspired of God. Semitic scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser, puts this point well:

Just as preachers today quote commentaries, journals, news periodicals, or even television shows to drive home or illustrate a point, so the biblical writers used external material to draw attention and make a statement. Paul quotes from pagan Greek poets. The psalmists and prophets borrow vocabulary and paraphrase material from ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Syrian literature. Jude quotes a book from the Pseudepigrapha (ancient writings that falsely claim authorship by a biblical character). **The people of biblical times knew the quoted material wasn't inspired, but it had meaning for them and their audience.**

*-Dr. Michael Heiser, "What's Ugaritic Got to Do with Anything?" [www.logos.com](http://www.logos.com)*

The same logic used to argue that we ought to view the Book of Enoch as inspired on the basis that it's quoted in the Bible can also be applied to a pagan poem. Look at what Paul is recorded to have said in the book of Acts when addressing the Athenians:

### **Acts 17:28**

For "in him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring."

These quotes are said to come from Greek poets writing about Zeus! Paul took the quotes and applied them to the God of Israel. Obviously, it would be absurd to say that a pagan poem should be in the Bible just because an apostle quotes it—so why would it be different with the Book of Enoch?

Some might argue that the passage from Jude indicates that the quote from Enoch must be authentic since he says that Enoch prophesied. And it could certainly be argued that some of the original sayings of Enoch, like what Jude quoted, were preserved in the book of Enoch. But again, even if Jude quoted directly from the book of Enoch, it still doesn't follow from that that the entire Book of Enoch is inspired or true, only the part that Jude quoted. And again, Enoch saying what was, perhaps, a widely held oral tradition, that wasn't exclusive to the book of Enoch.

Thus, it seems that the reasoning often used to suggest that the Book of Enoch should be considered sacred Scripture is severely underwhelming. The apostles didn't view it that way. The smaller Jewish communities that followed the Book of Enoch didn't view it that way either. There's simply no reason that we should.

Now, again, that doesn't mean that the book of Enoch is worthless. Far from it! We just need to appreciate it for what it is—namely pseudepigraphal literature that was popular in the first century, and which had religious significance to certain sectarian communities in Judaism.

It's from this basis that we can then begin to see the significance that the Book of Enoch had to the New Testament authors. Contrary to the Qumran community, the New Testament authors obviously didn't view the Book of Enoch as a source of divine revelation and authority. Why? Well, one reason is that much of the teaching in the Book of Enoch is directly contrary to the teaching in the New Testament.

We'll unpack the important differences between the Bible and the Book of Enoch a little later. But right now, here's how we would summarize the Book of Enoch's place within the various sects of the first century:

The first century Jews, just like us, read books! Go figure, right? And not *everything* they read was religiously significant to them. Like we pointed out earlier, Paul was apparently familiar with the work of pagan poets. Obviously, the Book of Enoch was a religious text that was meaningful to certain smaller sects of Judaism, but that doesn't mean that the New Testament authors valued it as such.

The Book of Enoch was like a first century version of a popular movie. It was well known in the ancient world, even among people who didn't follow it religiously.

To use an analogy, let's say it was like the first century Wizard of Oz. So when Jude or another New Testament author references the Book of Enoch to illustrate a point, it would be like if we today referenced the Wizard of Oz in a sermon. We could say, "There's no place like home"—a popular quote from the Wizard of Oz—in order to make a point about our eternal home with the Lord, or whatever.

This obviously wouldn't mean that the pastor believes everything in the Wizard of Oz is true. It would just mean that within our culture and time, everyone would be familiar with the reference, just as Jude's or Peter's original audience in the first century would have been familiar with the Book of Enoch.

To take this analogy further, we could even believe that some of the morals taught in the Wizard of Oz are true and meaningful. Courage, love, and wisdom are all important and biblical, right? But that does not mean that we believe in flying monkeys or that there's a magical world somewhere over the rainbow. The same goes for the Book of Enoch. The apostles certainly could have alluded to, or even quoted from, the Book of Enoch—emphasizing the parts of it that are true or relevant to their point without believing in all its teachings or considering it inspired.

And like we mentioned earlier, we know that the New Testament authors couldn't have considered the Book of Enoch inspired because it contradicts the Bible in some very significant ways. One point of concern is that the Book of Enoch identifies Enoch, not Yeshua, as the Messianic Son of Man figure.

In the section of the Book of Parables that we covered earlier, Enoch is shown a vision of the "Son of Man/Chosen One" who fulfills a bunch of Messianic prophecies from the TANAKH. This figure is chosen by God to rule the world; he sits on God's throne, judges, and receives worship. And then, as we

saw, the patriarch Enoch is the one who is identified as this figure:

And the Head of Days came with Michael and Raphael and Gabriel and Phanuel, and thousands and tens of thousands of angels without number. And he came to me and greeted me with his voice and said to me, “**You (are) that Son of Man who was born for righteousness**, and righteousness dwells on you, and the righteousness of the Head of Days will not forsake you.”

*-1 Enoch 71:13-14, George W.E. Nickelsburg & James C. VanderKam, “1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation,” p. 95*

Obviously, this puts the claims made in the Book of Enoch in direct conflict with the claims made in the Bible. The New Testament teaches that *Yeshua* is the Messianic Son of Man and Chosen One who fulfills what Isaiah wrote—the same passages, by the way, that the authors of Enoch draw upon to develop their Son of Man/Chosen One figure. The New Testament teaches that *Yeshua* is the one chosen to rule the world, sit on God’s throne, judge, and receive worship in the world to come.

Enoch and *Yeshua* can’t both be the Messiah. Yet the Book of Enoch clearly presents Enoch as this Messianic figure. In contrast, the authors of the New Testament presented *Yeshua* as this Messianic figure. So, who are we going to believe? Well since the New Testament is true concerning the Messiah, the Book of Enoch therefore contains false teaching.

To be fair, some scholars have disputed the fact that Enoch is the one identified as this Messianic figure. In fact, some older English translations of 1 Enoch 71:14 have made changes to this verse in order to make it say, “*This is the Son of Man,*” rather than identifying Enoch as this figure. But that translation is not reflective of what the verse actually says.

According to scholars, the older translations took some interpretive liberty in order to try to reconcile some apparent contradictions in the text. But the wording in all the manuscripts that we have, strongly supports the conclusion that Enoch is identified as the Son of Man figure, which is why it’s translated that way in the latest and most reliable English translations. And most scholars accept this.

Leslie W. Walck explains:

Charles’ solution was to emend the text of 1 Enoch 71:14 to the third person instead of the second person. Thus Charles read, “This is the Son of Man...” rather than “You are the Son of Man...” Then he made the necessary changes in the rest of the text to bring it into harmony with the 3<sup>rd</sup> person rendering. He also suggested that a paragraph, which revealed the identity of the Son of Man, has been lost. **But this extensive emendation has no surviving textual basis in any of the manuscripts**, and for this reason is to be rejected.

*-Leslie W. Walck, “The Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch and in Matthew.” p.5*

Other suggestions have been proposed to try to get around the uncomfortable conclusion that the Book of Enoch identifies Enoch as this Messianic figure.

One suggestion is that the “Son of Man” title used of Enoch in 1 Enoch 71:14 is distinct from the “Son of Man” title used of the figure referenced throughout the rest of the Book of Enoch. In other words, Enoch is *a* son of man—that is, a righteous person translated to heaven to reveal hidden secrets—but not *the* Son of Man, the Chosen Messianic figure who sits on God’s throne.



The problem with this suggestion is that there's nothing in the entire Book of Enoch indicating that the term used of Enoch is different from the term used of this Messianic figure. There's no reason to assume it should be understood differently in this one case. As Walck explains:

The whole flow of the narrative points to Enoch's dramatic identification as the Son of Man. The attributes with which he is spoken of here cohere extremely well with the Son of Man of the visions. He is bathed in righteousness: born for it, it abides with him, and God's righteousness will not forsake him (1 Enoch 71:14). Further, God promises him peace and that all the righteous will be eternally present with him (1 Enoch 71:15-16). These attributes all tend to underscore Enoch's identification as the Son of Man, not merely as one of the righteous humans who are already in heaven. For the reader, the identification of Enoch and the Son of Man is dramatic, but it has been prepared for.

-Leslie W. Walck, "*The Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch and in Matthew.*" p.7

Another suggestion is that the verse identifying Enoch as the Son of Man was added much later, perhaps even in response to Christianity. It's been suggested that it was added later in order to present Enoch as the Messiah instead of Yeshua. So the original author maybe didn't identify Enoch as the Son of Man, but someone else added the verse later.

While that's possible, the problem with this suggestion is that there's no evidence for it. The actual manuscript evidence we have for this verse is consistent. And again, scholars confirm that Enoch's identification as the Son of Man makes perfect sense according to the flow of the narrative. It's the logical conclusion of the entire story. But even if the verse was added later, we still have a problem. The Book of Enoch we have today is *still* in conflict with the Bible as it concerns the Messiah, and therefore it contains some pretty serious false doctrine.

Another conflict between the Book of Enoch and the Bible is the same conflict that these early sectarian communities had with the rest of Judaism in the first century: the calendar.

The sectarian communities that followed the solar calendar outlined in the Book of Enoch diverged from the rest of Judaism in calculating when the feast days should be kept. But Yeshua and the apostles did not follow the Enoch calendar. They clearly followed the same calendar as the rest of mainstream Judaism, keeping the feast days at the same times, as we see throughout the New Testament. Out of all the debates between Yeshua and the Pharisees, not once is the calendar ever brought up.

So obviously Yeshua and the apostles wouldn't have agreed with the calendar system outlined in the Book of Enoch. They followed God's calendar according to the Torah, the way it was interpreted in their day, not according to these fringe sectarian communities.

In conclusion, while the Book of Enoch is certainly valuable in some respects as it gives us a window into the differing expressions of Jewish faith in the first century, it is not Scripture. It was never considered Scripture even among the sectarian Jewish communities that produced and followed it. And while some sectarian communities considered it to be a source of divine inspiration, most Jews did not. There's no reason to think that followers of Yeshua thought of it that way either—in fact, there are several reasons to think that *they didn't* since it's in direct conflict with their own teachings!

If you'd like to study the Book of Enoch, our recommendation, for what it's worth, is simply to appreciate it for what it is. Don't force the Book of Enoch to be more than what it is. It's interesting if

you want to learn about the ideas that some early Jewish communities held to. But it simply is not a reliable source of sound theology and doctrine. The Bible alone is our final authority on all matters of faith and practice.

*We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at [www.testeverything.net](http://www.testeverything.net)*

**Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.**

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