

# Book of Enoch

The **Book of Enoch** is a title given to several works that attribute themselves to Enoch, the great-grandfather of Noah; that is, Enoch son of Jared (Genesis 5:18). (There are also three other characters named Enoch in the Bible: the son of Cain (Gen. 4:17), the son of Midian (Gen. 25:4), and the son of Reuben (Gen. 46:9; Ex. 6:14). The last two are transcribed "Hanoch" in the modern translations).

Most commonly, the phrase **Book of Enoch** refers to **1 Enoch**, which is wholly extant only in the Ethiopic language. There are also 2 other books called **Enoch**, **2 Enoch** (surviving only in Old Slavonic, c. 1st century; Eng. trans. in 1896) and **3 Enoch** (surviving in Hebrew, c. 5th-6th century). The numbering of these texts has been applied by scholars to distinguish the texts from one another. The remainder of this article deals with 1 Enoch only.

Whilst this book does not form part of the Canon of Scripture for the larger Christian Churches, various groups, including the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Coptic Church of Alexandria, regard parts or all of 1 Enoch to be inspired Scripture. The currently known texts of this work are usually dated to Maccabean times (ca. 160s BC).

## History

The book consists of five quite distinct major sections:

- The *Book of Watchers* (1 Enoch 1 - 36)
- The *Book of Parables* (1 Enoch 37 - 71) (Also called the *Similitudes of Enoch*)
- The *Book of the Heavenly Luminaries* (1 Enoch 72 - 82) (Usually abbreviated to *The Book of Luminaries*. Also called the *Astronomical Book*)
- The *Dream Visions* (1 Enoch 83 - 90) (Also called the *Book of Dreams*)
- The *Epistle of Enoch* (1 Enoch 91 - 108)

A great deal of the undercurrent to the narrative of the sections has been claimed to be concerned with the era of the Maccabees and it is for that reason that these western scholars date the sections as having originated during or after the 2nd century BC, although these assertions have not proved convincing to all concerned, for what they say is lack of any legitimate evidence of Maccabean-era authorship. 1 Enoch 6-11, part of the *Book of Watchers*, is thought to have been the original core of that Book, around which the remainder was later added, not least because Enoch is not mentioned in it.

The *Book of Parables* appears to be based on the *Book of Watchers*, but presenting a later development of the idea of final judgement - rather than being a final judgement of the fallen angels, the *Book of Parables* instead presents a final judgement of earthly kings. The *Book of Parables* contains several references to a *Son of Man*, as well as messianic themes, and has only been found in Christian editions of 1 Enoch, so several scholars have taken the view that this section dates from more Christian times. However, since the

term was also just a Jewish way of saying *human*, and since the final chapters of the section appear to identify Enoch himself as the *Son of Man* in question, the work may be earlier, and a number of academics have proposed that the *Book of Parables* may be as early as the late 1st century BC.

The *Book of Dreams* contains a *vision* of a history of Israel all the way down to the revolt of the Maccabees, leading scholars to date it to Maccabean times.

Before the discovery at Qumran (among the Dead Sea Scrolls) of fragments from 1 Enoch, there was some dispute about whether the Greek text was an original Christian production, or whether it was a translation from an Aramaic text redacted in Jewish circles. The chief argument for a Christian author was the occurrence of references to the Messiah as the Son of Man, however such references can also appear in Jewish texts around the turn of the era. The Ethiopian Church considers its Ethiopic version to be the original, since it is the only complete version, while the other languages only have different fragments of the work. Despite this, the majority of western scholars now claim a 3rd century BC Jewish authorship for its earliest parts.

## Canonicity

The book is referred to, and quoted, in Jude, 1:14–15 (KJV):

And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these [men], saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

Compare this with Enoch 1:9, translated from the Ethiopian:

And behold! He cometh with ten thousands of His holy ones To execute judgement upon all, And to destroy all the ungodly: And to convict all flesh Of all the works of their ungodliness which they have ungodly committed, And of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.

The Greek language text was known to, and quoted by nearly all, Church Fathers. A number of the Church Fathers thought it to be an inspired work, particularly Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Origen, Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian, based on its quotation in Jude. However, some later Fathers denied the canonicity of the book and some even considered the letter of Jude uncanonical because it refers to an "apocryphal" work.

The Jewish Sanhedrin at Yavneh c. 90 AD removed this book from its Scriptures. Partly due to this, the book was discredited after the (Christian) Council of Laodicea in 364. The Greek text was subsequently lost. The early Christian father Tertullian wrote c. 200 AD that the *Book of Enoch* had been rejected by the Jews, because it contained prophecies pertaining to Christ.