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“The Book of Enoch in the Early Church”

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With

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The Book of Enoch in the Early Church

The book we know as *1 Enoch* was well known to early Christians. Its importance produced an understandable question among some influential early Christian writers and, one may presume, Christians in general: Should *1 Enoch* be considered inspired and thus “Scripture” in the manner of other books in the Old Testament? Ultimately, Christianity at large answered this question negatively, save for the Church in Ethiopia. But the discussion is nonetheless of interest today. This episode presents an abbreviated survey of how select Second Temple Jews and early Christian books and writers assessed the scriptural status of *1 Enoch*.

Google Book referenced:

James C. VanderKam, “[1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs, and Enoch in Early Christian Literature](#),” Pages 33-101 in James C. VanderKam and William Adler, eds., *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity* (Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum 3/4; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

paper referenced:

[Nickelsburg Knowledge of Enoch and Watchers Story in Early Judaism and Christianity](#)

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 93, The Book of Enoch in the Early Church. I'm your layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you feeling this week?

MSH: Good, I should say better. I had a cold after the Delaware event. It kind of knocked me out for a couple of days but pretty good now. I'm almost over it> I'm on the tail end of it anyway.

TS: Just a cold?

MSH: As far as I know, yeah. I got it from my brother. He came up for the Delaware thing and we went out to eat a couple of times and that was all it took I guess. Thanks for bringing that up from Virginia.

TS: We'll blame it on him. This show we'll be talking about the Book of Enoch in the Early Church, and I think we touched on it a little bit in the second half of episode 90.

MSH: Yeah, I would think so. We've flirted with this a couple times so this'll be more or less a full-blown treatment of the idea. It will be a little different than most of our episodes because it's not going to be strictly a biblical discussion but it'll be more of a canonical discussion. And I'm going to be quoting from some early church writers but I get this question a lot, how should we look at Enoch? And I know what you said, we have brought that up but I want to add to that. I'll repeat some of that but I want to add to that substantially how early church documents, early church epistles, books that are not in the canon but reflect what people were thinking about Enoch at the time, what they say, and important figures in the course of their writings. They do mention Enoch and so I thought it would be a good episode because I get this question a lot. People are interested in it.

So I should preface what we're going to do by saying I'm going to be quoting from a couple sources. One is Nichelsburg's massive commentary. It's actually a two volume commentary on 1 Enoch. And 1 Enoch is the proper title for the book, what you typically call the book of Enoch. There's more than one book of Enoch but the one everybody sort of thinking of when they use book of Enoch as a phrase's 1 Enoch. Nichelsburg's commentary on that is massive. It's probably 6- 700 pages at least, combine the two volumes. It's very technical but he has an appendix, not an appendix. It's part of his introduction on Second Temple Jewish attitudes about Enoch. In other words, other Second Temple resources that sort of said what Enoch says or interacted with Enochian material and then that is followed by a survey of early Christian sources, early Church fathers and whatnot, the same thing, how much of the Enochian worldview did these writers know and understand and embrace, and what did they think about the book of 1 Enoch?

So I've pulled that stuff out of Nichelsburg's commentaries and made it a PDF and will be posted with this episode on the Naked Bible Podcast website, right next to the episode itself, so you can get a fuller treatment through that document. And then there's also going to be a link to VanderKam's essay. James VanderKam was an Enoch specialist for many years. He taught at Notre Dame and he is a Christian. He belonged to the CRC church. I don't want to use the pastime. He's still alive. I don't think he's at Notre Dame anymore but he has a really nice essay on the reception of Enoch, 1 Enoch in the early church. And it's even longer than Nichelsburg's.

It takes a slightly different way of presenting the material so you can get access to a lot of that on Google books, not all of it because it's copyrighted material. On More Unseen Realm, I have some screenshots from the Google books things so you can look there as well. But either one of those, if you want more information than what we'll cover here, there you have the links. So to jump in here, the book we know as 1 Enoch was well known to early Christians. That shouldn't be a surprise given some facts. 1 Enoch is a substantially pre-Christian literary work and what I mean by that is most of the book that we refer to as 1 Enoch predates the era of Christianity.

There are some questions about parts of the book being added during and after the Christian era but for the most part, this is a clearly pre-Christian work quite substantially. So it's not something that Christians would have composed. But there are what scholars call interpolations here and there, or at least speculated interpolations that could have come from the hand of Christian writers. And that alone would tell you something, if that happens to be the case. It would tell you that they were Christians who revered the book and wanted to sort of supplement it or align it with some of the things that perhaps books of the New Testament canon were saying and whatnot. It doesn't argue for its canonicity. It just argues that this was important book and we want to make our contribution to the set of ideas. That was very common for the period. It's actually common in the biblical period, in the Hebrew Bible itself where a prophetic hand will come in later and update something to the current circumstances of the believing community.

It's not unusual. But anyway, it's substantially pre-Christian. Second fact that would make it no surprise that early Christians knew about Enoch was Christianity itself as a community, as a theological or faith system was born out of Second Temple Judaism. Christianity has deep Jewish roots. And in the Second Temple period, the Enochian material, 1 Enoch, was an important work. And then thirdly, the New Testament writers either presuppose the content of Enoch or they utilize its content in what they wrote. And I'm thinking here most specifically of Peter and Jude. I am actually working on a book manuscript now for a specific publisher on the importance of the book of Enoch and even more specifically than that, the importance of the Watcher story for New Testament theology. So it's more than just Peter and Jude folks, but Peter and Jude are the ones that we often think of as drawing most directly from Enoch so early Christians knew this. They could read Peter and Jude's epistles. If they had a Jewish background, they would've been well familiar with where this source material on the occasion Peter Jude used came from because they had read that. It wasn't a secret. This wasn't an esoteric secret book or anything like this.

It was well known and it was well known in the early church. So that naturally, that heritage contributes to a pretty understandable question among some early influential Christian writers and one could presume Christians in general, and that is, should 1 Enoch be considered inspired in the Scripture in the manner of other books that we and they would put in the Old Testament? Ultimately, the answer to this question was no. Christianity at large answered the question negatively except for the church in Ethiopia, the Abyssinian church as we might refer to it today, but basically the early Ethiopian church. They accepted the entirety of the book of Enoch as part of its canon. But they were the only exception. But the discussion as you can imagine is nevertheless of interest today. I get this question a lot which is why we're doing it as a topic. So what I'm going to do here is sort of an offer you an abbreviated survey of how select Second Temple Jews, certain groups in the Second Temple period, certain writers' writings in the Second Temple period, and then select early Christian books and writers, assessed the

scriptural status of 1 Enoch because there is a language used about Enoch that very clearly tells us that the same question was being asked then, and you had people take different sides. So what you're going to hear, I'm condensing things.

You can get the longer treatment with the Nichelsburg PDF and VanderKam. I'm going to try to focus on writers that had some sort of positive assessment about 1 Enoch that we should consider this as Scripture. We should consider this inspired. I want the audience to at least know who those people were and that there were important influential Christians who came down on the side of yes as an answer to the question. So I want to focus on those guys and then we'll get to my own sort of assessment of this because there aren't too many of these that would answer the question yes, but there are a much larger group of early Second Temple Jews and early Christians whose writings, even if they didn't comment on whether 1 Enoch was inspired not. They knew the content well and they used it and embrace it and thought it was valid, specifically, the whole sons of God story, Genesis 6, the Watcher story. They accepted as this is the true account, a true account of what happened just before the flood. In other words, they weren't hiding behind things like the Sethite interpretation. So that is more familiar to us so I'm not going to spend a whole lot of time on the fact that they bought into the content, at least the storyline content of the Watcher story in 1 Enoch. I want to focus today on what some early writers said about it being inspired.

So you ought to at least know who the people were that kind of held that view. Let's start in on the Jewish side with Second Temple Jewish material precursors to this whole Enoch discussion that happens in the early church. Should we consider 1 Enoch inspired? What status do we assign it? There are a number of Jewish sources that embraced the content of 1 Enoch. I'm going to point out a couple of them and then, it's really going to be the book of Jubilees and then Dead Sea Scroll material. The scroll material is important because that's sort of the evidence that we have from the Jewish period, the best evidence that we have that people were thinking about Enoch as something canonical. But let's jump in at the book of Jubilees first. I want to make a comment here about why Jubilees is very similar to Enoch, but there's a specific reason why Jubilees is sort of important for this discussion, and that is, among certain Jews, this is going to sound a little odd, but among certain Jews in the Second Temple period, there was sort of an assumption that the figure of Enoch, and therefore, this material that bears his name, the figure of Enoch was actually more important in the progress of revelation to the believing community than the Torah, than what Moses did.

In other words, there were some Jews that thought Enoch trumped Moses in status because of perhaps his chronological priority, but certainly also because of the material that was written. And that actually comes out in Jubilees. Now Jubilees, I'm going to quote a little bit from something I wrote for our company. I work at Logos. We have a Greek Pseudepigrapha database of all the Greek material that preserves the book of Enoch and I wrote the introductions to not only the Greek material that represents Enoch, that preserves Enoch, but all the Pseudepigrapha in Greek. And so I'm going to quote from my own introduction to the book of Jubilees just briefly. And I'm doing this to make a fairly specific point here. I wrote,

“Jubilees is presented as the account of a revelation given to Moses on Mount Sinai. The book begins in the third person with God forewarning Moses that Israel will apostatize but subsequently repent. The book then shifts to a first-person accounting in the mouth of an angel. The angel

speaks for God informing Moses about all that transpired from the beginning of creation to the Israelite arrival Sinai. Jubilees is, thus, a rewriting of Genesis 1 through Exodus 19, hence, its inclusion by scholars in the rewritten Bible, the expansion of the biblical stories genre. Paleography of the surviving Hebrew fragments suggest a date of 125 to 100 BC for those fragments but there reasons to suspect, however, that the original document was composed of at least 50 years earlier, so let's just call it 200 BC for Jubilees."

MSH: You'll notice that Jubilees is part of this rewritten Bible genre. So in the Second Temple period, there were Jews who thought it perfectly acceptable to expand upon the Torah. And again, they didn't accept Jubilees as canonical but this practice was permissible. It was okay. These were still important books and Jubilees was quite an important book. Now among Jubilees additions to the biblical text, you actually get material from 1 Enoch that forms part of those changes, those additions, to what would have been the Torah. This is why Jubilees and 1 Enoch are so similar in many respects. I've earlier alluded in an earlier episode of the podcast, I can't remember which one but we got to talking about the importance of the book of Enoch in the New Testament in a few scattershot passages. And I mentioned Galatians 3-4, this paper I heard a couple years ago at SBL. I blogged about it, about how the book of Enoch informs the phrase that the law was added because of transgressions. And the question was, just whose transgressions are we talking about?

And the guy who did the paper was suggesting what Paul was thinking of was the transgression of the Watchers. And if you presume that and then read Galatians 3-4 against the backdrop of the sin of the Watchers, it solves certain exegetical problems in Galatians 3-4. I'm bringing that up because Jubilees actually reflects that perspective. By bringing content of 1 Enoch into the Torah and rewriting it essentially was saying look, we think that the Enochian material is so important that it's at least as important as what Moses said and it might even be more important. So the figure of Enoch being elevated to the level of and, in some cases, even beyond that of the figure of Moses, this was a stream of thought that wound its way through the Second Temple period in certain Jewish groups in that period. You have to remember there was no one singular Judaism of the Second Temple period. There are multiple Judaisms, Judahisms. We're used of these sects like Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and all sort of stuff. Well, that's part of the picture.

People would claim, for obvious reasons and legitimate reasons that they were Jews, they were the followers of the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but they didn't agree theologically on certain points. They didn't agree even in their approach to Scripture in certain points, and there was sort of an Enochian strain or Enochian current running through the Second Temple period where there were a number of Jews that thought what Enoch has here is he shouldn't play second fiddle to Moses, to the Torah. If you were a Pharisee, you just didn't want to hear this. Well, the thinking is that there are a number of New Testament writers that held Enoch in special regard, high regard. There's Jude, of course. There's Peter, and now we bring Paul into the discussion, at least in Galatians 3-4. So I'm setting the table here because I want you to know that the book is around during this period. That's kind of an academic observation but what's less obvious is how certain Jews looked at it in terms of it being on par with what Moses wrote.

What Moses wrote was considered canonical, and so if you're considering what Enoch wrote on the same level to the extent that you're willing to take material from Enoch and bring it into the Torah and rewrite it and create this new book that we're calling Jubilees here, and even though you may not be claiming that that should be looked upon by the entire community as inspired, there were some Jews that would've looked at what you were doing and said well, Enoch is at the same level. You're putting him right in here with Moses with the Torah so therefore we should take this book of 1 Enoch and look at it in the same way. And there were some Jews who did that. I'm trying to give you sort of part of the historical and logical flow of the idea. Where you really see it surface in fairly plain ways is in the Dead Sea Scrolls. You have certain scrolls there that make it evident that whatever Jewish hand was writing this particular scroll at a given point, that that person did consider 1 Enoch at the level of the Torah and considered it inspired. Now, I'm going to quote from Nichelsburg here in a moment, but there are a number of scrolls among the Dead Sea Scroll deposit, repository is a better word there, that come from the book of what we now know his 1 Enoch, especially the Watcher story. And Nichelsburg kind of summarizes this. I'm going to read this quote to you and pull one item out for discussion. Nichelsburg writes,

“The influence of the Enochic tradition at Qumran is evident also in the community’s possession of (multiple copies of) texts that employ or quote from the Enochic texts. These include the *Book of Jubilees* (eight copies) and a related text (three copies), the Genesis Apocryphon (one copy), a fragmentary Hebrew text from Cave 1 that contained a form of the story of the watchers very close to 1 Enoch 6–11 (1Q19),”

MSH: The Genesis Apocryphon, I've mentioned this before. This is the text where you have Noah's parents having an argument over whether Noah was born from the Watchers or not. The dad, Lamech, is a little suspicious and his wife Bathenosh has to say don't you remember the other night when we had intercourse and of course it's your kid. Quit making this nonsense up. That's the text of Genesis Apocryphon and it has a lot of Enochian material in it. Let's go back to Nichelsburg here.

“a *pešer* on the story of the watchers (4Q180-181), a commentary or expansion on the Apocalypse of Weeks (4Q247), and the Damascus Document (eight copies), which knows the story of the rebellion of the watchers and a tradition about the giants and also appeals to the authority of the *Book of Jubilees*.”

MSH: Now what I want to focus on is this thing called a *pešer*. A *pešer* text, these are of special interest because *pešerim*, that's the plural, *pešerim* text interprets other text. They're like commentaries. The Hebrew verb *pešer* means to interpret. As Brook, a Dead Sea scholar, comments,

“The term has come to be used in modern scholarship of a literary genre of biblical commentary and the exegetical techniques used in it. Producing a *pešer* text on the story of the Watchers indicates that the Enochian story

was highly respected, if not considered Scripture, by whoever produced the *pešer*.

MSH: Now, there are *pešer* texts known in the Dead Sea Scrolls. They are almost always of biblical books, Old Testament books. There's a *pešer* on Habakkuk, a *pešer* on Nahum. These little commentaries, they're sort of line by line or phrase by phrase where the writer will quote something from the biblical book and then write *pešero*, which means its interpretation is and then they'll do some interpretation. Since this is so heavily stilted toward Old Testament books, when you get a *pešer* on Enoch in the same collection of books, the Dead Sea Scrolls, it really raises eyebrows. They wouldn't be writing a *pešer* on Enoch unless they thought it was at the level of this other stuff. We should recall though that this would be just be one Jew's perspective, whoever's scribe this was. You can't say that all of Judaism thought that Enoch, 1 Enoch, was at the same level as the Old Testament books we consider canonical. Some Jews thought it was. That's the only point that we're making here. So the situation actually, if I could use an illustration, is kind of similar to modern Christianity when it comes the Second Temple Judaism.

There's lots of Christianities today. You got Protestant versus Catholic within the Protestant category. Lord knows how many denominations there are but everybody refers to themselves as Christian. But they're significant theological differences and denominational preferences. Well, the same thing in Second Temple Judaism, you get a variety and there were some who thought Enoch should be in there. It should be treated as Scripture. So that was a situation in early Judaism, Second Temple Judaism, and that attitude is also going to be reflected in the early church. So this is the broad point we're making, that just because you find an early church authority that said I think 1 Enoch should be in the canon, I'm quoting it as Scripture doesn't mean that that opinion should be binding on the whole church because that opinion was around before there was a church within Judaism and it was just one approach within the broader Jewish community.

Same thing going on the early church, so I just want to make that clear. I don't consider, and listeners who listened to the podcasts for a while or heard me on other outlets know that I don't consider the book of 1 Enoch canonical. I actually think the question doesn't mean a whole lot because if you consider the book valuable you ought to read it and it ought to inform your biblical study because it informed Peter and Jude's biblical writing. It doesn't have to be canonical to do that. Who cares? We're doing the episode because I know a lot of people do care but my view is that it's not in the canon. But I just want you to be aware that there are early Christian sources that said nope, should be in there. So let's transition out of the Christian stuff and I'm going to be quoting from some documents. We don't know who wrote the stuff. And I'm also going to be quoting from early church figures that we do know historically. So let's just start with the Epistle of Barnabas.

This is something that is pretty early. The Epistle of Barnabas is dated to the 130s A.D., probably written in Egypt according to scholars who focus on what we would call the apostolic fathers material. We don't know precisely who wrote the Epistle of Barnabas. We don't know if it was THE Barnabas mentioned the book of Acts or not, but the material we have goes back into the 130s and Barnabas would've been dead by then but we just don't know. But this is probably the earliest Christian source that actually cites material from the 1 Enoch as Scripture. Now Peter and Jude, their material is going to be older but Peter and Jude don't have a formulaic

expression that says something like, as the Scripture says, or for Scripture says when they quote Enoch. Peter and Jude definitely do draw material directly from the book of 1 Enoch but they just don't add these kinds of expressions. If they did, this wouldn't even be a debate. We would be having Enoch in the canon, but since they don't, we have the debate. The Epistle of Barnabas uses language like that.

It uses the phrase, for Scripture says, and it quotes 1 Enoch, what we know today as 1 Enoch 89:56 verse 60 and some of verses 66 and 67. Comments about the destruction of the Temple come right from Enoch and the Epistle of Barnabas says, for Scripture says, and there you go. So he says the same thing, whoever the writer was, uses the phrase, for it is written, which is a common formulaic expression in the New Testament and elsewhere for citing something inspired, citing Scripture. The author uses it to quote loosely 1 Enoch 91:13. So here you have three or four places in the Epistle of Barnabas where Enoch is cited as Scripture, cited with the same formulaic expressions. Justin Martyr, a little bit later in his second apology, which was written, early church scholars to the best of their ability date is between 148 and 161 A.D. Justin presumes the Watchers story, that they cohabited with human women, taught humankind forbidden knowledge, all that stuff. And Justin, the reason his second apology is important for our discussion's that he recognizes in the course of his writing, in the second apology, he recognizes parallels between the story of the Watchers in Jewish texts, like Enoch, and Greek stories about the Titans, the gods.

Justin knows the literature well enough to know that there are some clear parallels here but he clearly in his own writings believes that the Jewish source, the Jewish version of events, which would be 1 Enoch, was superior in its truthfulness, so he had a higher view of the Enochian story. So it doesn't say, it doesn't prove that Justin thought 1 Enoch was inspired but what it does show is that, I got two versions of this. I'm going to accept the Jewish version as authoritative. And so since Justin does that, it suggests that he considered first Enoch perhaps at the level of inspiration but can't actually be sure. But it's still an important source because it shows a deliberate preference, a deliberate choice as far as authoritative truth between these two sources, and Justin does not land on secular Greek material, the classical Greek material, that would've been part of their religion. No, he goes over to the 1 Enoch side of that debate and says this is authoritative. Irenaeus is up next a little later, moving chronologically. He lived roughly 130 to 200 A.D. and his writings make it very evident that he knew 1 Enoch pretty well. He knows it in detail in a lot of places. And it's also quite clear that he accepted the accuracy, the historicity of the Watchers story. Now what's of interest to us specifically is in the 10th chapter of a writing that we call Irenaeus Against Heresies, the first section, section 1, Irenaeus says something interesting. I'm going to read the whole quotation and pull out a few points to focus on. Irenaeus writes,

“The Church, though dispersed through our the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: [She believes] in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations of God, and the advents, and the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven in the flesh of

the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, and His [future] manifestation from heaven in the glory of the Father "to gather all things in one," and to raise up anew all flesh of the whole human race, in order that to Christ Jesus, our Lord, and God, and Saviour, and King, according to the will of the invisible Father, "every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess" to Him, and that He should execute just judgment towards all; that He may send "spiritual wickednesses," and the angels who transgressed and became apostates, together with the ungodly, and unrighteous, and wicked, and profane among men, into everlasting fire;"

MSH: That harkens back to the lake of fire topic that we did connecting that to the Watchers. This is where the idea comes from. Here you have Irenaeus saying exactly the same thing. But what I want us to notice here is that what he does, you may have noticed while I read through that, that there are in his sort of summary of doctrine, there are certain phrases taken from Scripture as Irenaeus is waxing eloquent on all this stuff. They're certain wordings and phrases taken from Scripture and he prefaced sort of that summary by saying that the church believes in the Holy Spirit who proclaim through the prophets the dispensations of God and all this stuff, and he has in the course of summarizing doctrine, he quotes texts that we would consider canonical. Well, right in the midst of doing that, he has this inclusion of the angels who transgressed and became apostates together with the ungodly and the unrighteous, the wicked and profane among men, into everlasting fire. So that has suggested to some that Irenaeus is lumping 1 Enoch material into some of these other New Testament citations, every knee should bow, things in heaven, things on earth, that this suggests Irenaeus held Enoch to be one of the prophets because what he's quoting from his prophetic Scripture. It's canonical Scripture. Vanderkam notes of this passage, and I don't think we can conclusively say that Irenaeus thought that way about Enoch and I think Vanderkam's note is fair here. He says,

"It's not impossible that Irenaeus in the wording of his lines about the angels is thinking of 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6. But the language he uses does not reproduce their vocabulary closely. There is however some verbal similarity with 1 Enoch. If Irenaeus is here reflecting the Watchers story from 1 Enoch, then he is attributing it to the Holy Spirit's inspiration of the prophets and including it within a brief statement of the Christian faith shared throughout the scattered churches."

MSH: So what Vanderkam is saying, you could you take what Irenaeus has written there and say he's getting that from 2 Peter and Jude. And Vanderkam says well, that's possible, but the verbal similarities are closer if you actually are looking at 1 Enoch in Greek. So it's equally possible that Irenaeus is thinking, citing in his head, thinking in his head, of 1 Enoch. And if that's the case, then Irenaeus is lumping 1 Enoch in with the other prophets, with the inspired material that he quotes elsewhere in the passage, so we don't know exactly what was floating around in Irenaeus head but it's a least a possibility. The next guy Tertullian, is the main figure in this whole debate. Tertullian was an early Christian writer from Carthage. He lived roughly 155 to 240 A.D. He is famous or, depending on your view, infamous for being the early church's staunchest defender of 1 Enoch's inspiration. For example, in his work, On the Apparel of

Women, book 1 Chapter 3 he calls 1 Enoch Scripture just point-blank. He calls it Scripture and defends its status using 2 Timothy 3:16,

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

MSH: He actually uses 2Timothy 3:16 to defend 1 Enoch being Scripture. Now here's the quote. It's a long quote from Tertullian but just so that you get a flavor of what he's thinking, here we go. He writes,

“I am aware that the Scripture of Enoch, which has assigned this order (of action) to angels, is not received by some, because it is not admitted into the Jewish canon either. I suppose they did not think that, having been published before the deluge, it could have safely survived that world-wide calamity, the abolisher of all things. If that is the reason (for rejecting it), let them recall to their memory that Noah, the survivor of the deluge, was the great-grandson of Enoch himself; and he, of course, had heard and remembered, from domestic renown and hereditary tradition, concerning his own great-grandfather's “grace in the sight of God,” and concerning all his preachings; since Enoch had given no other charge to Methuselah than that he should hand on the knowledge of them to his posterity. Noah therefore, no doubt, might have succeeded in the trusteeship of (his) preaching; or, had the case been otherwise, he would not have been silent alike concerning the disposition (of things) made by God, his Preserver, and concerning the particular glory of his own house.”

MSH: I'll stop the quote right there. The objection would be, how in the world could the book of Enoch survive the flood? Didn't it destroy everything? SO Tertullian is trying to explain that because he's treating it as an objection to his view that Enoch should belong in the canon. So back to Tertullian, he says,

“If (Noah) had not had this (conservative power) by so short a route, there would (still) be this (consideration) to warrant our assertion of (the genuineness of) this Scripture: he could equally have *renewed* it, under the Spirit's inspiration, after it *had* been destroyed by the violence of the deluge, as, after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian storming of it, every document of the Jewish literature is generally agreed to have been restored through Ezra.

But since Enoch in the same Scripture has preached likewise concerning the Lord, nothing at all must be rejected *by* us which pertains *to* us; and we read that “every Scripture suitable for edification is divinely inspired.” By the *Jews* it may now seem to have been rejected for that (very) reason, just like all the other (portions) nearly which tell of Christ.”

MSH: So Tertullian knows that 1 Enoch, there is content in 1 Enoch that has been, for those of you who are familiar with my content, this will sound familiar. If not, you're going to have to catch up. But there is two powers in heaven stuff in Enoch. If you've ever seen or heard my two powers in heaven lecture, there are passages I quote from Enoch about a godhead, Jewish godhead. And so Tertullian knows this and there's other content that points to the Messiah. So Tertullian's argument here is look, even if the Jews don't accept this as canonical, we should because it bears witness to the Messiah, to a divine Messiah, to the godhead, to all this stuff. This is what we believe so he says it tells us about Christ so we should accept this book. Back to Tertullian,

“Nor, of course, is this fact wonderful, that they did not receive some Scriptures which spake of Him whom even in person, speaking in their presence, they were not to receive.”

MSH: Tertullian winds up by saying look, the Jews don't accept other stuff that pointed to Jesus or they don't accept this interpretation or whatever. So material that reinforces the truth about the Messiah, we should consider this canonical. We should consider it inspired. So that's his argument, really the guts of his argument. Now in his treatise on idolatry, Tertullian discusses certain celebrations and practices of Christians, in other words, decorating doors with lamps and wreaths that he considers idolatry. To make his case, Tertullian quotes Enoch's work as a product of the Holy Spirit. So here's another Tertullian quotation going after decorating your doors. He just thought that was horrible and he's going to use Enoch to warn Christians to not to do this so he's treating it as Scripture. So Tertullian writes,

“But let your works shine, says He; but now all our shops and gates shine! You will now-a-days find more doors of heathens without lamps and laurel-wreaths than of Christians. What does the case seem to be with regard to that species (of ceremony) also? If it is an idol's honor, without doubt an idol's honor is idolatry. If it is for a man's sake, let us again consider that all idolatry is for man's sake; let us again consider that all idolatry is a worship done to men, since it is generally agreed even among their worshippers that aforetime the gods themselves of the nations were men; and so it makes no difference whether that superstitious homage be rendered to men of a former age or of this. Idolatry is condemned, not on account of the persons which are set up for worship, but on account of those its observances, which pertain to demons. The things which are Cæsar's are to be rendered to Cæsar. It is enough that He set in apposition thereto, and to God the things which are God's. What things, then, are Cæsar's? Those, to wit, about which the consultation was then held, whether the poll-tax should be furnished to Cæsar or not. Therefore, too, the Lord demanded that the money should be shown Him, and inquired about the image, whose it was; and when He had heard it was Cæsar's, said, Render to Cæsar what are Cæsar's, and what are God's to God; that is, the image of Cæsar, which is on the coin, to Cæsar, and the image of God, which is on man, to God; so as to render to Cæsar indeed money, to God yourself.”

MSH: Now he continues on and he says it's a little more railing about specific deity relationships, door gods or whatever. So he's really going off on decorating your doors here, and he says,

“[O]f course we know that, though names be empty and feigned, yet, when they are drawn down into superstition, demons and every unclean spirit seize them for themselves, through the bond of consecration. Otherwise demons have no name individually, but they there find a name where they find also a token. Among the Greeks likewise we read of Apollo Thyræus, *i.e.* of the door, and the Antelii, or Anthelii, demons, as presiders over entrances. These things, therefore, the Holy Spirit foreseeing from the beginning, fore-chanted, through the most ancient prophet Enoch, that even entrances would come into superstitious use.”

MSH: So he's basically saying look, there is material in Enoch that talks about this stuff and the Holy Spirit inspired Enoch to write about it for this occasion right here. So Tertullian uses this passage fore-chanted, forewritten, or forespoken by Enoch through the Holy Spirit to tell you Christians nowadays to knock it off. Stop decorating doors like this because this is something we would associate with idolatry and demons are associated with idolatry and demons are going to be using this in some way to harm you or pervert your thinking or whatever. So he very clearly links what Enoch wrote just broadly speaking. He's saying Enoch wrote about this stuff, too. He equates that with the Holy Spirit, the activity of the Holy Spirit. Tertullian is not ambiguous. He thinks that it should be considered part of the canon. Now later in life, and I've alluded to this before, he and others who defended Enoch are going to say well, nobody else is really jumping on the bandwagon here and I'm sort of the only one out here sitting here defending this.

So the Spirit that we trust would have moved the mass of the community to recognize which books are canonical, and I'm the only one singing this song so I must've been wrong. He's going to bow to what they believe about the providential activity of the Spirit ultimately. But Tertullian, very famous for being very clear in what he thought, at least in these writings here. Next we'll look at Origen. This will be the last one we look at. Origen lived in the 180s to around 254 or so A.D., was early Christian scholar born in Alexandria, Egypt. And it's interesting. Here you have Tertullian from Carthage, Origen from Alexandria, could it be, because Origen is going to go back and forth on this. He's going to be pro-canonical and ambivalent. But it this part of the reason why the Ethiopian church ultimately embraced Enoch as canonical because here you have two African scholars, African leaders in the early church who were very influential? I don't know, maybe. Maybe that had something to do with it but ultimately we just don't know. Origen, born in Alexandria, as Vanderkam notes,

“In Origen's writings, one finds evolving attitudes about the book of Enoch and these followed chronological lines. He alludes to the book in four of his writings, all of which can be dated fairly accurately to specific stages in his career.”

MSH: So let's take a look at some of these just in general terms. I'm not going to quote Origen at length because it is fairly convoluted. I did that for Tertullian because it's so point-blank but Origen a little less so. But at one point, Origen considers the writings of 1 Enoch,

“authentic products of the patriarch and cites them as Scripture today,” quoting Vanderkam here, “however, also he indicates that others in the church don't hold a position.”

MSH: So Origen is very honest. He says look, when it comes to Enoch, at one point in his career he thought, well okay, this is Scripture, just like Tertullian. We should treat it as such but then also admitting that not everybody would agree with this, just like Tertullian did. Tertullian said if you recall a few minutes ago, he opens that passage by saying regarding the scripture of Enoch, not everybody thinks it's Scripture. So Origen's doing the same thing. Since Origen does acknowledge that not all the church embraces 1 Enoch as authoritative, you know that's in his head and later on his writings. That's going to surface again. And ultimately, I'm going to quote Nichelsburg here, he sums up Origen this way because like Vanderkam said, Origen mentions it four times. You have this one affirmation then you have this ambivalence. Even with the affirmation, you get a little bit of other people don't agree with me and we need to make that clear. So it shifts from that into something that's just even more ambivalent about Enoch. So Origen's enthusiasm for the book, as far as its inspired status, fades over time but here's what Nichelsburg writes.

“Finally, one must consider Origen's claim that the churches do not accept the books of Enoch as divine. This, strongest Origen's negative statements about Enoch, seems not to be a development out of Origen's previous ambivalence but an acknowledgment of his ambivalence, an acknowledgement of the fact which is one of several arguments that Origen uses to serve his purpose. Since his opponent cites material from Enoch, Origen emphasizes the books questionable status in the churches. At the same time, the words of Salsas indicate the stories about the Watchers were known and transmitted in the Christian community.”

MSH: So what Nichelsburg is commenting on is that in the course of several of Origen's mentions of 1 Enoch, he's interacting with it in relation to people he's writing against. And what Nichelsburg is saying is look, since his opponents will also be using Enoch, Origen very slyly, and again, does he really believe this now or does he still think it deserves canonical status, but he very slyly brings up the fact that Enoch as a source might not be the best source because lots of Christians don't accept it. So that's a fair statement in terms of his rhetorical argument. Origen uses that to his advantage to undermine his opponents when they use Enoch. And I think this is important because you're going to see some of this come out with Augustine.

Augustine is sort of the big, by his day, Enoch is sort of poo poo-ed and Augustine is the one who champions the Sethite view and all that stuff. Part of it is Augustine's own history where he had been a member of the Manichaean community after his conversion and they revered the book of Enoch and eventually splits with the Manichaees and they become opponents. So Augustine doesn't hold Enoch in high regard or the Watchers story, the literal view that the book of Enoch puts forth. And that influence's Augustine to be opposed to it. And

because of his stature, that becomes the dominant position in the early church. So you already see some of that here happening with Origen were Origen could be read one of two ways but his ambivalence is pretty apparent. Nicholsburg adds, just one more thought from Nicholsburg. He says,

“I conclude the following: Origen knew parts of 1 Enoch, the book of the Watchers, the book of the Luminaries, probably the book of the Parables, he knew them well enough to quote, paraphrase, and summarize an occasional passage and to recognize Salsas’ misrepresentation of the material. Origen considered the text to be authentic and Enoch to be a prophet whose writings were Scripture. He occasionally cited the book, quoted a passage, even exegeted it in order to support his exegesis of the biblical text or to make a point that he could or would not base on a biblical text. At the same time, he acknowledged that the Enochian writings were not universally accepted as Scripture and sometimes with an eye to the possible skepticism of his readers didn't invest a great deal in the probative value of these texts.”

MSH: In other words, he didn't hang too much on Enoch because he knew a lot of his readers wouldn't be buying it as a source. So what Nicholsburg is saying is he thinks in his heart of hearts, Origen was just like Tertullian. Origen accepted it as Scripture but for rhetorical purposes would express ambivalence about it, wouldn't hang too much on it because he knew other people weren't going to accept it, other Christians weren't going to accept it. But in his own heart of hearts, Nicholsburg thinks that Origen was following the same trajectory as Tertullian. Is Nicholsburg right? I don't know but what the discussion shows in the way Nicholsburg ends his quote is the way I'm going to end this section of our episode here is that you did have serious serious biblical scholars, early church scholars, leaders in the early church, assigned canonical status to 1 Enoch.

They quote it as Scripture. They call it Scripture. They say it's from the Holy Spirit. You can't get much stronger than that. And Tertullian even defends the view using 2 Timothy 3:16 so that much is very clear. It had its defenders in the early church and they weren't beating around the bush, especially Tertullian. He's very consistent until he more or less, here we are. I guess I wasn't right, that sort of thing. Well, all that being said, what it shows us is that parts of Christianity were in the minority and this was their position. But their position didn't result in other Christians looking at them saying you can't be Christian. You can't really be believers if you accept 1 Enoch as canonical. That means you're a heretic. That means you're outside the body of Christ. Nobody is saying stuff like that.

That would've been absurd. What you have, just like we have in modern times with “Christianity”, is a doctrinal disagreement and the doctrinal disagreement in this respect happened to be within the doctrine of bibliology. What would we consider part of the canon or not? This is actually a very familiar place. The problem is a lot of Christians don't know anything about church history. But Martin Luther could write vehemently against the book of James being the canon and nobody bats an eye. Nobody would say that because he said this, Martin Luther was not a real Christian. He didn't really understand the Gospel. It would be absurd but this is sort of the attitude among certain groups today. If you revere Enoch and if you want to

include it in the canon, somehow you're just a whack job and probably aren't even a believer. You're a heretic.

Why don't you go off and form a commune and all this kind of stuff. It is just over the top. This would not have been the way the discourse was handled in the early church. The early church would have said, well, Tertullian, bless your little head. We will love you. We know you're a believer. We're just not buying this Enoch stuff and that would've been the end of it. There would have been no question in Tertullian's commitment to Christ because of his position on Enoch. So I think we need to get beyond that. And likewise, Tertullian isn't questioning everybody else because they don't embrace Enoch and neither was Origen, neither was Justin Martyr. That just wasn't on the radar that sort of dumb discussion, firing salvos from one side to the other over the issue of Enoch. That is not what you see. You see an honest questioning and people saying this is where I'm landing. We're all believers here but this is where I'm landing. Here's why I'm landing there and let's just call it good. And they did. Now since we're 2000 years removed from this or 1800 or whatever, from the lifetime of these guys, this is sort of a settled question even though in Ethiopia and Abyssinian African church, we still have reverence for Enoch.

It's still canonical there. But that should not be used as a basis for concluding that they're not real Christians down there because they belong to that group. The issue with being a real Christian is do you understand the Gospel and believe it? Are you adding to the Gospel? Are you adulterating it in some way? That's the issue with salvation. It's not this. From my own view, to wrap up here, I consider the questions kind of moot. I don't see a compelling reason to embrace Enoch as canonical. It doesn't matter to me that Jude and Peter quote it because the biblical writers quote lots of stuff that we would not even for a moment consider canonical. When the Psalmists quote the Baal Cycle, I'm not thinking I wonder if the Baal Cycle should be in the canon. No, the fact that something is quoted or something is paraphrased or something that the content of something is embraced and then re-articulated into a book that is inspired, none of those things are arguments for the canonicity of the thing being utilized or the thing being quoted.

That argument simply does not work. You will go in very very bad theologically, bad, awkward, ridiculous, and frankly contradictory places with that logic, deeply contradictory, especially something like the Baal Cycle. So it's a non-argument. A thing does not have to be considered inspired for a thing to be considered useful and important. So Peter and Jude considered the book of 1 Enoch useful and important, so much so that it helps them to articulate some points in their own writings about the angels that sinned, about the Watchers story. And we have that in the New Testament. We have material there that doesn't come from the Old Testament. The only place it comes from is from Enoch. They took it seriously. It helped them articulate their theology and that's fine, happens all the time. Most people don't even realize what's going on in the Old Testament when they make these arguments for 1 Enoch being part of the canon on the basis of Peter and Jude. They're completely ignorant about what's going on in the Old Testament in the same respect. Since I'm not, since I'm well aware of that material, I just frame the whole issue differently.

It doesn't matter that it's quoted. I don't care if it's canonical. If I get to heaven some day and Tertullian walks up to me with Jesus and says hey, Jesus has something to tell you. You were wrong about 1 Enoch. It really belonged in there. I'm not going to be disappointed. I'm going to say oops, sorry. I was wrong, you were right. Let's enjoy eternity now in the global

Eden. You won that one Tertullian. I don't care. I don't care. I just don't think this has to be a divisive issue, even though for many it is. Maybe I just get those kind of e-mails too often. I don't know. But that's the story of the 1 Enoch reception in the early church. It had some serious proponents but for the most part, people weren't buying it. And my assessment is who cares? It's a useful book. It's important to know the content of the book because ultimately that will help you parse some things in your Bible, especially the New Testament, in a better way if you know what the writer is thinking, whether writing this or that, would it be Paul or Peter or Jude.

TS: Mike, what did the early church think about the Watchers themselves and the supernatural?

MSH: The early church would've thought of them as real legitimate divine beings. You'll get other terminology used in them. You get sons of God. You'll get angels. You'll get holy ones. So they're not believing they're figments of the imagination or just sort of spiritual strawmen characters to make a story interesting. They're going to take it seriously, which is why I recommended to listeners go up to where you downloaded the podcast, or if it wasn't directly online, go up to the Naked Bible Podcast site online and download Nicholsburg file because I think you'll be really surprised at how many writers in the early church, even if they don't comment on what they think about Enoch being inspired or not, they knew the story and accepted it.

They accepted the supernatural view of Genesis 6:1-4 even as articulated in a book like Enoch. For them, this was biblical theology. If they would have read the chapters in my Unseen Realm about this, they would've said what's the big deal? Doesn't everybody think this way? Of course, nowadays no, no they don't. In fact, what used to be the dominant view in the early church is now a tiny minority view in the current church and there are historical reasons for that. I mentioned that the book I'm writing. I'm hoping to hand that thing in by the end of the summer. I can't really say more about it. It's nonfiction. The working title is Reversing Hermon, and the subtitle is The Importance of the Watcher Story for Understanding the New Testament, or something like that.

So basically everywhere that Enochian material is sort of the back story, the backdrop to something in the New Testament, that's what the book's about. I'm going to take people through all those passages and show how the New Testament writer was thinking of Enochian material. And if you're able to have that in your head, you'll understand the passage much better from that perspective because that's the perspective according to which it was written. A good example is like the head covering comment because of the angels. That's an obvious one. We've done a whole episode on the head covering issue, but there are lots of things like that in the New Testament where Enoch is sort lurking in the background and certain things New Testament writers put in there can really only be successfully understood if you're thinking about Enochian content when you read that stuff in the New Testament.