

119

MINISTRIES

“The following is a direct script of a teaching that is intended to be presented via video, incorporating relevant text, slides, media, and graphics to assist in illustration, thus facilitating the presentation of the material. In some places, this may cause the written material to not flow or sound rather awkward in some places. In addition, there may be grammatical errors that are often not acceptable in literary work. We encourage the viewing of the video teachings to complement the written teaching you see below.”

The Son of Man in the Book of Enoch

1 Enoch, more popularly known as the Book of Enoch, speaks of a Messianic figure that has caught the interest of many believers. In this teaching, we are going to explore what the text of 1 Enoch tells us about the identity of this Messianic figure.

Who exactly did the authors of 1 Enoch believe this Messianic figure to be? Well, they directly tell us!

First, if you are interested in more information on 1 Enoch and how exactly it’s useful—and not useful—to believers today, please consider watching our teaching, [Testing the Book of Enoch](#).

In this teaching, we are going to zero in on a particular claim that the authors of 1 Enoch make, and the important implications it has for believers as we consider the value of these writings. Some of the information we’re going to unpack is a little technical, but we think it is very relevant information for those of us who are interested in this topic. So having said that, let’s dive in.

According to The Parables of Enoch, which is 1 Enoch 37-71, the patriarch Enoch is taken into heaven and shown prophetic visions concerning a Messianic figure known as the “Son of Man.”

This figure is also called the “Chosen One,” “Anointed,” and “Righteous One,” which are all names referring to the same person in the narrative. The author of this section of 1 Enoch clearly draws upon Messianic prophecies from the books of Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and so on, in order to develop this figure.

According to the narrative, this Messianic figure will do the following:

- He 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 (1 Enoch 45:3-6; 51:1-3).
- He will destroy sinners and strike down kings and rulers who are against God (1 Enoch 46:4-5).
- 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).
- In his name, the righteous will have salvation (1 Enoch 48:7).

- He will usher in an era of peace (1 Enoch 69:26-29).

At the end of The Parables of Enoch, Enoch is taken to the “heaven of heavens” where he sees a fiery heavenly palace. There, Enoch is greeted by God—who is called “The Head of Days—the four archangels, and innumerable other angels.

Surprisingly, Enoch is greeted *as* this Messianic, Son of Man figure that he had seen in his visions:

1 Enoch 71:13-14

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.”

-George W.E. Nickelsburg & James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation* (Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 2012), p. 95

This quote comes from *The Hermeneia Translation*. If this translation of 1 Enoch 71:14 is correct when it identifies Enoch as this Messianic figure, then this should impact how much significance we place on these writings.

Think about it. If the author of The Parables of Enoch intended to identify Enoch as this figure who fulfills these Messianic prophecies, then that puts The Parables of Enoch in direct conflict with the teachings of the New Testament. The New Testament identifies Yeshua as the Messianic Son of Man who fulfills these prophecies. And Enoch and Yeshua obviously can’t both be the Messiah.

So the question comes down to this: do we have good reasons to accept this translation of 1 Enoch 71:14 as correct?

Well, those who reject this translation have offered some objections. For instance, some have pointed out that an older translation renders this particular verse differently. The popular 1912 translation from R. H. Charles has the verse in the third person rather than the second person. Thus, Charles’ translation reads this...

“*This* is the Son of Man.”

-R. H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch* (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1912), p. 145

This difference in translation has some big implications in regard to the identity of this Son of Man figure! If Charles’ translation is correct, then Enoch is *not* being revealed as this figure. Rather, he is being directed to a separate figure. Those who consider 1 Enoch to be “divinely inspired” in some way often suggest that Enoch was, in fact, seeing Yeshua in his visions!

So which translation is correct? Should the verse read, “*You* are the Son of Man” or “*This* is the Son of Man”?

First, we might ask *why* there is a difference in translation. Enochic scholars have long been puzzled by Enoch’s identification as the Son of Man in 1 Enoch 71:14. Why? Well, it means that, in Enoch’s

visions, Enoch didn't recognize himself as this figure until his identity is revealed to him at the end of the story.

As scholar Leslie Walck writes:

If this reading is authentic, then it is the only instance of apocalyptic auto-vision that survives, in which the seer does not recognize himself.”

- Leslie W. Walck, *The Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch and in Matthew* (New York, NY: T&T Clark International, 2011), p. 5

R.H. Charles was skeptical about Enoch not realizing that he was seeing himself in his visions. He believed Enoch was seeing someone else in the visions, but 1 Enoch 71:14 directly contradicted that idea. In light of this perceived problem, Charles actually emended the text of 1 Enoch 71:14.

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 3rd 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* (New York, NY: T&T Clark International, 2011), p. 5

Renowned scholar John J. Collins likewise has criticized Charles' approach. He says this:

The solution of Charles was to emend 71:14 to read “this is the Son of Man . . .” and change “you” to “him” in the following verses. This procedure has no basis in the text and is clearly unacceptable.

-John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), p. 188

As Leslie Walck points out, R.H. Charles also theorized that a lost passage revealed the Son of Man figure as someone other than Enoch. Then, *based on this theory*, he deliberately emended—that is, mistranslated—the Ethiopic text to reflect a third person rendering rather than what the text actually says.

In R.H. Charles' translation, between verses 13 and 14 of Chapter 71, he inserts the following comment:

[Lost passage wherein the Son of Man was described as accompanying the Head of Days, and Enoch asked one of the angels (as in 46:3) concerning the Son of Man as to who he was.]

-R. H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch* (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1912), p. 144-145

So why is this relevant? Well, the problem is that no evidence has ever surfaced to substantiate R.H. Charles' theory on which his translation of this passage is based. In other words, Charles' translation of the passage is driven by a baseless theory. For this reason, modern Enochic scholarship universally rejects Charles' translation in favor of a literal rendering of what the verse actually says.

Now, R. H. Charles was certainly a great scholar in many ways, especially for his time. However, it is no secret that his work was often driven by certain presuppositions, which led to his positing interpolations and emendations a little too freely in his translations. (See John Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, p. 15)

Therefore, when it comes to 1 Enoch 71:14, it would be good to follow the lead of the scholar T.W. Manson. He says this...

“Here we abandon Charles, who has rewritten the rest of the passage in accordance with *his view* of what Enoch ought to have said.”

-T.W. Manson, *The Son of Man in Daniel, Enoch and the Gospels*, BJRL 32 (1949-50) pp. 171-93

In summary, we have every reason to accept a literal translation of the passage rather than the emended translation offered by R.H. Charles. That would mean the verse should read, “You are that Son of Man,” identifying Enoch as this Messianic figure in the story.

However, even though we accept that the translation is correct, a few objections are still raised against Enoch being this Son of Man figure.

For instance, it's suggested that the “Son of Man” identified as Enoch in 1 Enoch 71:14 is actually distinct from the Messianic figure described throughout the rest of the narrative. 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—that is, the chosen Messianic figure who sits on God's throne and judges the earth.

However, the problem with this suggestion, as Leslie Walck explains, is that...

The author has not given any indication that this ‘son of man,’ Enoch, is different from the term used in the rest of *Par. En.* [The Parables of Enoch]

-Leslie W. Walck, *The Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch and in Matthew* (New York, NY: T&T Clark International, 2011), p. 5

In other words, nothing in the text indicates that the term used of Enoch is different from the term used of this Messianic figure. Also, according to scholars, the entire flow of the narrative seems to lead to the revelation of Enoch as this figure. It's the dramatic climax to the story. Enoch is then also described in the exact same terms used to describe the Son of Man figure in the visions:

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* (New York, NY: T&T Clark International, 2011), p. 7

In summary, the idea that Enoch is acclaimed by Michael as just another righteous human "is anticlimactic and has not been prepared for by the author." (See Walck, *The Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch and in Matthew*, p. 7)

That is to say, the evidence points away from Enoch being identified as simply a righteous human who is distinct from the Messianic figure from earlier in the narrative. It's more likely that Enoch is identified as the very Messianic figure that he had seen in the visions.

Another objection raised against this position is that 1 Enoch 70:1 seems to distinguish Enoch from the Son of Man:

1 Enoch 70:1

And after this, while he was living, his name was lifted up into the presence of that Son of Man and into the presence of the Lord of Spirits from among those who dwell on the earth.

-George W.E. Nickelsburg & James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation* (Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 2012), p. 92

So how do we resolve this apparent contradiction between 1 Enoch 70:1 and 1 Enoch 71:14?

Well, unlike 71:14, there is a textual variant of 70:1 within the actual manuscript evidence, which gives us warrant for an alternative translation. Citing this textual variant, which omits the preposition *ba-xabēhu* ("the presence of"), Leslie Walck gives the following translation:

And it came to pass after this the name of that Son of Man was raised, while alive, to the presence of the Lord of Spirits from those who dwell on earth.

-Leslie W. Walck, *The Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch and in Matthew* (New York, NY: T&T Clark International, 2011), p. 132

This translation implies "that it is not the name that is raised to the Son of Man, but the name of that son of man (i.e., a human being, Enoch?) that is raised, while alive, to the Lord of Spirits." (See Walck, *The Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch and in Matthew*, p. 130)

It is beyond the scope of this teaching to list all of the reasons in favor of Leslie Walck's proposed translation, but in his book, he cites several detailed grammatical and contextual reasons why this variant manuscript better reflects the original wording and therefore is to be preferred. (See Walck, *The Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch and in Matthew*, p. 129-138)

This proposed translation would remove the apparent contradiction and also "prepare much more consistently for the later identification of Enoch and the Son of Man in ch. 71." (See Walck, *The Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch and in Matthew*, p. 130)

However, even if we stick with the majority witness in the available manuscripts of the passage, the apparent contradiction can still be resolved. In his paper, “Righteous One, Messiah, Chosen One, and Son of Man in 1 Enoch 37-71,” scholar James C. VanderKam agrees that it’s “unlikely that 70:1 draws a separating line between Enoch and the son of man.” He goes on to discuss how this verse ought to be interpreted in light of its context and literary structure:

The verse functions as an introduction to all of chs. 70-71, as Sjöberg noted, and summarizes what happens from 70:2 to 71:16. **It would be remarkable if at the beginning of this artistically structured unit, there was a statement that contradicted what the unit itself forthrightly declared.** What the author appears to have intended in 70:1 was that Enoch's name was elevated to the place where those characters whom he had seen in his visions were to be found, namely in the throne room of the celestial palace. That is, he does not see the son of man here but begins his ascent to the place where he himself will perform that eschatological role—perhaps at this time becoming one with his heavenly double, now that his earthly sojourn has ended [...] No passage requires that one think of a separate being called the son of man existing in heaven while Enoch lives elsewhere. Enoch sees the son of man in visions of the future, not in disclosures of the present. He is seeing only what he will become.

- James C. VanderKam, “Righteous One, Messiah, Chosen One, and Son of Man in 1 Enoch 37-71,” in J. H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Messiah* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1992), p. 184

A final objection that is raised against Enoch being identified as this Messianic figure is the suggestion that the verse was added much later. That is to say, perhaps the original author didn’t identify Enoch as the Son of Man, but a Jewish scribe added the verse later as a polemic response to Christianity.

While that’s possible, it’s much more likely that the phrase is original. Even scholars who have previously posited the theory that 1 Enoch 71 was a redactional addition no longer see that to be the case. (See Walck, *The Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch and in Matthew*, p. 7)

Also, 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. (See VanderKam, *Righteous One, Messiah, Chosen One, and Son of Man in 1 Enoch 37-71*, p. 177)

Finally, the suggestion is really a moot point. Even if you posit a hypothetical version of 1 Enoch that perhaps doesn’t contain this contradiction with Scripture, the point remains that *every version* of the passage we have today does. There is no variant in the manuscript evidence we currently have for 1 Enoch 71:14. That has massive implications for the question of whether we should consider 1 Enoch to be divinely inspired. How could we if it contradicts Scripture?

So concerning this Messianic figure described in the Parables of Enoch, the teaching contained in 1 Enoch contradicts the teaching of the apostles. The author of The Parables of Enoch presents Enoch as the individual who fulfills Messianic prophecies contained in Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and so forth. The apostles, however, taught that Yeshua is the fulfillment of these prophecies.

This would lead to the conclusion that 1 Enoch is not inspired by God and therefore should not be considered to be a source of sound doctrine and theology. And there are several other reasons for this conclusion, as we unpack in our teaching, [Testing the Book of Enoch](#).

To be clear, this does *not* mean that 1 Enoch is worthless—far from it! As we’ve said many times, 1 Enoch is a valuable primary source that gives us a window into the social history, ideas, and internal debates between the differing expressions of Jewish faith during the Second Temple era.

The apostles were certainly aware of the traditions contained in 1 Enoch and perhaps even drew upon them in their own teachings. So 1 Enoch is certainly valuable and can give us some great insights into the world of Second Temple Judaism. However, nothing in the New Testament leads to the conclusion that the apostles considered the Enochic writings inspired—especially when the teachings contained in 1 Enoch contradict the apostles’ own teachings about the Messiah.

Now, some might ask: if the apostles didn’t consider 1 Enoch inspired, why does it seem that Jude quotes it? Why do other biblical authors seem to allude to these writings? We go into this in more detail in our teaching, [Testing the Book of Enoch](#). For now, consider what Semitic scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser, says regarding how we ought to view the significance that 1 Enoch held to the biblical authors:

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

In short, the apostles’ use of 1 Enoch can be compared to other instances where they used extra-biblical material that was meaningful to their contemporary audience. As Heiser explains, their use of this extra-biblical material does not require that they believed the material to be inspired. It would be like a pastor today quoting a popular movie. A movie might teach meaningful lessons that align with biblical values, but nobody today believes movies are inspired. In the same way, the apostles certainly could have alluded to, or even quoted from, 1 Enoch—emphasizing the parts of it that are true or relevant to their point—without believing in all its teachings or considering it inspired.

In conclusion, we need to appreciate 1 Enoch for what it is—that is, pseudepigraphical literature. It’s literature that has been falsely attributed to a figure in the past (in this case, Enoch). This type of literature was popular in the first century, and some of it, like the Enochic writings, had religious significance to certain sectarian communities in Judaism. While there may be parts of 1 Enoch that could have been derived from oral tradition and possibly even contain some original sayings of Enoch, such an interpretation would be pure speculation.

To be clear, this teaching is not intended as a crusade against 1 Enoch. We simply encourage believers to exercise caution. We must *not* think of it as inspired Scripture. It was not religiously significant to the Messiah nor the apostles, and it even contradicts their teachings in some places. When we appreciate 1 Enoch as pseudepigraphical literature, we will be in a better place to rightly handle it in order to glean valuable historical insights about Second Temple Judaism.

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

EMAIL: Info@119ministries.com

FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/119Ministries

WEBSITE: www.TestEverything.net & www.ExaminaloTodo.net

TWITTER: www.twitter.com/119Ministries#