

# The Book of Enoch

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## Neglected Scripture—or Something Else?

A Position Paper © 2024 by Jay McCarl

*“What do you think about The Book of Enoch?”*

Hardly a week goes by when I’m not asked about the veracity of this intertestamental apocryphal book.

“Do you think it’s Scripture?” is a common question. What I’m actually being asked is, *“Do you think it was inspired, that it was deliberately cut out of the Bible and should it put back in?”*

“Of course, you know about ‘The Watchers’—and what about those giants—the Nephilim? Have you seen the photos of the huge skeletons and footprints ‘they’ have recently unearthed?” \* Oh my.

“Well, Jesus quoted from the Book of Enoch (or *First Enoch*—BOE), you know—and so did Jude.” No, Jesus did *not* quote from the BOE—in fact, He never even mentioned the man. Jude, however, quoted from the BOE (V. 14-15), and his point is powerful and excellent.

“So, since Jude quoted from the BOE, and all Scripture is inspired by God, that means the BOE is inspired and should be considered Scripture...” This sounds sensible—and the early church father, Tertullian would agree—but there’s a problem.

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul quoted an ancient Cretan philosopher-poet named Epimenides. Epimenides was a 7<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century BC idol-worshipping pagan, yet Paul quoted him when addressing the Areopagus (Acts 17:28-29), citing a historical event in which Epimenides was the central character (Acts 17:23-29). Further, Paul quoted Epimenides’ famous paradox to Titus (1:12-13) and declared it to be true.

It’s self-evident that neither Paul or Titus considered the sayings of Epimenides to be inspired Scripture, yet some of what he said became *part* of Scripture—either because it was intrinsically true, or it was included in (and thus *as*) the inspired text as a

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\* The ‘photos’ cited as proof are found online, usually on social media.

reinforcement of what the author was saying. Other such examples exist in the Scriptures (citations from The Book of the Wars of the Lord, etc.) that became *part* of Scripture because they were *cited in* the Scriptures, but the source of which was not considered Scripture by the author.

Several early church fathers and leaders (Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Commodianus, Origin, Anatolius, Cassiodorus and others), like Jude, used limited parts of the BOE to reinforce doctrines and dogmas concerning demons, the mating of demons with women (their offspring being the Nephilim), the demonic ‘black arts’ and more. Even so, the early church and church fathers, with the exception of Tertullian, not only excluded Gnostic and apocryphal writings—including the BOE—they *rejected* them as Scripture.\*

The same is also true of pre-New Testament writings (the Qumran community, Philo, the Midrash, Josephus and pre-Christian rabbinic traditions), all of which appear to directly or indirectly incorporate the afore mentioned subjects from the BOE without ever venerating it as a legitimate Scriptural source.

### **A Few Lingering Questions**

*Could the BOE contain Biblical truth?*

Sure—why not. Nearly every Christian author, preacher and counselor does the same as the afore-mentioned ancient writers whenever they quote from an early church father or apocryphal book to reinforce or illustrate the truth of their point (hopefully with integrity), whatever it may be. Even more, the writings of C.S. Lewis and the sermons of C.H. Spurgeon (along with the works of countless other giants of the Christian faith) *contain* Biblical truth but are in no way *revered* as inspired Biblical truth. The cults, on the other hand, usurp Scriptural authority to their own ends by adding to or taking away from the recognized canon of Scripture.

*Do the ‘watchers’—beings described in the BOE—exist?*

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\* According to Irenaeus’ record (AD 202) of the documents the early church considered inspired texts. Note: Irenaeus, in fact, discussed the mating of demons with women, referenced in the BOE.

What does the Bible say? We can't say for sure one way or another. Since the canon of Scripture doesn't speak of them in any specific manner, they are not our concern.\*

*Should Christians accept the existence of the mysterious Nephilim?*

Absolutely. The Bible says they existed in both antediluvian and postdiluvian times—but it reveals very little else about them, except that they were big, powerful, evil and apparently extinct (but for the ongoing divisiveness in the church brought about by endless speculation and confusion about their untold story. They have no bearing on our present faith in Christ or the prophetic future.

One of my favorite sayings is, *the Bible is a revelation, but not always an explanation*. As followers of Jesus who desire to remain faithful to His Word, we must remember that we are *not* tasked with filling in the blank spots in the Bible, but to read and do what has been revealed to us in its pages. The BOE has nothing to add to the Bible or to our faith except, perhaps (and unfortunately) for people grasping for tangible reinforcement for their faith (the purported huge skeletons, etc.)—things that have no bearing on their present Christian walk or the prophetic future—things that may even impugn, in the eyes of the world, the credibility of their witness and the state of their mental health.

## **Conclusion**

Employing the BOE as a lens through which we can better understand the Bible is like using the movie *Braveheart* to better understand the historical William Wallace—it contains some truth, but it's hardly accurate. The same is true of most apocryphal writings, or they would not have been considered 'apocryphal', especially by the ancients.

On the other hand, the Bible always has the last, best word—especially when it speaks of itself:

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,<sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. **4** In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge:<sup>2</sup>

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\* The first BOE was written sometime between 300-200 BC and was not written by the Biblical Enoch.

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. <sup>3</sup> For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. <sup>4</sup> They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. <sup>5</sup> But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.”

—*The Apostle Paul, 2 Timothy 3:16-4:5*