

Chasing Enoch: The Man, the Myth, the Mason?

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Introduction

Enoch is a name all masons will find familiar. The Enoch of the Hebrew bible appears in various places within our lore and ritual. Yet his presence in our work is not what compelled me to this chase, but rather a random viewing of the History Channel during which a commentator suggested Enoch may be linked to the building of the Great Pyramid of Giza. Those familiar with my masonic scholarship know linking this great stone edifice to our illustrious Craft is a personal passion, if not an obsession. To that end, I honestly recall nothing more about the program I was watching. I heard “Enoch”, I heard “The Great Pyramid” and instantly became distracted.

With input and encouragement from my learned and curious brethren I decided to turn this chase into scholarly research. But research requires research questions, so I pondered for some time, what is it that I want to ask? “Did Enoch build The Great Pyramid” seemed a little aggressive and self-fulfilling. “How did Enoch find his way into so many aspects of modern Freemasonry” seemed like a rabbit hole so deep and complicated I would never find my way out. So, I settled upon a more elegant and simple question...Who is Enoch?

For the answer I began with the obvious move, reading *The Book of Enoch*. An apocryphal text, *The Book of Enoch* never actually made it into the Bible. I’m guessing because its tales of giants, and flying machines, and fantastical portals into the beyond read more like a science fiction novel than a spiritual text. *The Book of Enoch* is not a difficult read but certainly a fanciful one. Indeed, it does not have the “feel” of the Hebrew and Christian texts that made it into our biblical canon. Yet, despite the tome not resembling anything I would hear repeated in church on Sunday, it did seem full of allusions which I interpreted as fundamentally masonic. Most notably, Enoch 10:19, “An all-desirable tree shall be planted on it, and they shall plant vines on it, and the vine which they plant thereon shall yield **wine** in abundance, and as for all the **seed** which is sown thereon each measure shall bear a thousand, and each measure of olives shall yield ten presses of **oil**.” Could this be an allusion to the wages of a Fellowcraft, could it be a reference to the corn, oil, and wine ceremony traditionally performed at the laying of symbolic cornerstones, could it be the missing link between Enoch and his appearance in our ritual? The honest answer is, I don’t know, but it is definitely curious.

As I continued to read through the book of Enoch, I found more and more passages that my mind “wanted” to link to both Freemasonry and the building of The Great Pyramid. But I convinced myself to subdue my own passions and let the research lead where it would. The reality is, it didn’t lead to discovering the true identity of the Great Pyramid builder. Instead, the research which was challenging, wonderous, often confusing, and full of dead ends and restarts, lead me down a biblical and historical path that ended in Freemasonry.

Enoch The Man

Our exploration of Enoch begins not in the lessons of the bible nor in the recesses of a tiled masonic lodge, but rather in the far reaches of human history. Enoch, if he truly existed, was after all simply a man. An ancient man for sure, but a man nonetheless. Given the almost complete absence of historical (non-Biblical) record attributed to Enoch the only practical strategy to determining the specifics of his person is to cobble together the lore of the Bible with the archeological timeline and then make educated assumptions based on the evidence provided.

Starting with the lore, we know that Enoch is the great grandfather of Noah. His lineage puts him seventh from Adam. His father was Jared, his son was Methuselah, and his grandson (father of Noah) was Lamech (CBE, 2011). We have no choice at this point but to take a spiritual leap of faith and assume the accuracy of the biblical record as it relates to Enoch's lineage. This in and of itself does not provide any insight into Enoch's day to day existence, nor does it shed light on his nature, mannerisms, ambitions, or motivations. It simply proves the point that he was a man with an historically relevant family.

To know more about how Enoch lived we must first attempt a feeble reconciliation of Biblical and historical timelines. Geologically, science has proven there were two cataclysmic flood events that could geographically be attributed to the story of the flood of Noah. One happening approximately 20,000 years ago and a smaller but likewise devastating flood happening approximately 7500 years ago (Trefil, 2000). In terms of the Gregorian calendar this gives us a range of 18,000-5500 B.C.E. If we assume that Enoch, lived functionally within the same epoch of time as his great grandson, we can use this range as a historical marker. If there was an historical Enoch, he most likely lived within this range of time.

As previously noted, the historical record between 18,000-5500 B.C.E. is incredibly sparse so we will need to make some assumptions based on what we know. We do know, that ancient hunter gatherer societies were beginning to organize, civilize, and operate with some level of social sophistication as early as 12,000 years ago in centers like Gobekli Tepe. While little is known about the true nature of Gobekli Tepe, evidence suggests an understanding of the stars and a practice of animistic polytheism (Hancock, 2015). Additionally, pseudo-archeology has postulated for some time, that the great Sphinx of Giza actually predates the pyramids significantly and was potentially built between 10,970-8810 B.C.E. (Hancock, 1995). All of which culminate in the founding of mainstream archeology's conception of civilization which began in the Nile Valley and the Fertile Crescent of Mesopotamia around the end of our time range in 5500 B.C.E..

If we accept that Enoch was the great grandfather of Noah, and that Noah lived within the time frame of 18,000-5500 B.C.E., and that during this time frame rudimentary civilizations began to form we can (with some creative license) make the following assumptions about

“Enoch the man”:

- Enoch was of Middle Eastern descent
- Enoch was most likely polytheistic (prior to his encounters with the one God)
- Enoch lived on the cusp of mankind’s transition from hunter-gather nomads to modern civilization
- Enoch likely had a rudimentary if not marginally sophisticated understanding of astronomy

Barring some major archeological discovery which re-writes everything we know about the human historical record; we will likely never be able to confirm the actual existence of the historical Enoch or make any determinations about the specifics of his life. However, using what we do know from history and what we choose to believe from the Bible we can cobble together a “profile” with a certain amount of logical consistency. And for the purposes of this research, that will have to suffice.

Unlike the tangible history, the written “mythology” of Enoch is extensive. Much has been written about the mythical Enoch, and by many (largely unknown) authors. The three primary texts attributed to Enoch are; *1st Enoch*, *2nd Enoch*, and *3rd Enoch*. Subordinate Enoch texts include; *The Book of Giants*, *The Book of Jasher*, and *The Book of Jubilees* (Schnieder, 2017). And of course, there is a brief mention of Enoch in the Bible, specifically, Genesis 5:21-24 (CEB Bible, 2011). For the purposes of this section, we will focus primarily 1st-3rd Enoch, discussing in-depth the mythology of 1st Enoch.

Paul C. Schnieders’ reference book, *The Three Books of Enoch and the Book of Giants* provides the following synopses of Enoch’s three primary tomes:

- 1st Enoch
 - Apocryphal text in the western Biblical canon
 - Known as the “Book of Enoch”
 - Canonical in Ethiopian Kebra Nagast
 - Known as the “Ethiopic Book of Enoch”
- 2nd Enoch
 - Apocryphal text Slavic in origin and language
 - First discovered in the fifth century
 - A political and historical reinterpretation of 1st Enoch
 - Represents a transition between the mysticism of Enoch and Metatron
- 3rd Enoch
 - Apocryphal text Hebrew in origin and language
 - Known as “The Book of Places”
 - Known as “The Book of Rabbi Ishmael the High Priest”
 - Considered a text representing a transition to Hekhalot or Merkabah mysticism

A full examination of all three primary Enoch texts along with the subordinate texts would be a paper in and of itself and far too exhaustive process for this work. To that end, we will focus our attentions on the mythology of the Enoch origin story, *1st Enoch*, or as it is known in western circles, *The Book of Enoch*.

According to Schnieder, *The Book of Enoch* is said to be the accounting of “Enoch’s walk with God” and his experiences in seeing heaven and the future. Functionally, *The Book of Enoch* is composed of 5 distinct major sections (Book of Enoch, 2022):

- *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)

The narrative begins with a group of fallen angels known as “Watchers”. Expelled from heaven by God, the Watchers fall to Earth where they bestow upon mankind various degrees of knowledge, including metallurgy and weapon making. As a result of their interactions with humans, many of the Watchers succumb to sin and debaucheries and engage in intercourse with mortal women who give birth to a race of half-human, half-angelic creatures referred to as Nephilim or “Giants”. Chief among the Watchers is the angel Azazel. Azazel bares the responsibility not only for the conveyed knowledge but likewise the immoral fall of the Watchers. As a result, God summons the other Watchers to capture and imprison Azazel (Litt, 2016).

At this point the story transitions into Enoch’s personal walk with God, in which God reveals to Enoch the glories of heaven and the terrors of the future of mankind. Enoch’s journey is a fantastical one filled with primitive interdimensional transport vehicles (known to ancient alien enthusiasts as a spaceship), visions of hellfire, and experiences of pure bliss. All of which is accompanied by divinely offered editorials on the present state of mankind and the woeful future to be faced by the sinful and the non-believers. It is a perfect mix of fire and brimstone crossed with science fiction, at the end of which Enoch assumes his rightful place alongside God, never returning to the Earthly realm (Litt, 2016).

Enoch’s unlikely journey leads us back to the Bible, and the book and verse(s) from which this mythology is born, Genesis 5:21-24; “*Enoch walked with God, and he was no more; for God took him*”. Other than the genealogy, this is all the canonical Bible has to say about Enoch and his “walk”. But inherent in this statement is the assertion that Enoch was special. Enoch was singled out by God to ascend to heaven in his living form, a gift given only to Enoch and Christ himself. Given his unprecedented status in God’s eyes, it stands to reason that *1st Enoch* exists along with all the other apocryphal texts attributed to this single sentence in the Bible. It likewise gives a sneak peek into why Enoch is so fundamental in Freemasonry. Which we will discuss in depth.

Enoch The Mason?

Why begin this portion of the Enoch investigation with a question mark? In true masonic fashion the question mark is symbolic. Symbolic of the enigma that is Enoch the man and myth. We know very little about the historic man Enoch drawing conclusions not through historical fact but through questions answered in historical context. We know very little about the Biblical Enoch other than he walked with God in living form, we just don't know why? As for the mythical Enoch, we have much in the way of creative narrative, but a cursory read through apocryphal Enoch texts truly establishes more questions than answers. Last but not least we arrive at the most important question (at least in context of this paper), was Enoch a mason?

To begin to answer the question, we start where every mason has, in the Blue Lodge. While Enoch's mentions in the context of the masonic Blue Lodge are sparse, the allusions to our ritual within *The Book of Enoch* are palpable. In the introduction of this work, the reference of Enoch 10:19 was given. 10:19 quite literally mentions the vine, the seed, and the olive. Even the newest of Fellowcraft can see the link between this chapter/verse and the wages they have received in the form of corn, oil, and wine. But to note the very first allusion to the Fellowcraft in *The Book of Enoch*, one must go almost to the beginning and read Enoch 2:1, "Observe ye everything that takes place in the heaven, they do not change their orbits, and the luminaries which are in the heaven, how they all rise and set in order each in its season and transgress not against their appointed order." This astronomical lesson is readily apparent in the Fellowcraft staircase lecture and one may argue a fundamental representation of the rotation of officers in a lodge.

In *The Book of Enoch*, we likewise notice several allusions to the masonic 3rd degree. Chapter 12 in its entirety could be interpreted as the Hiram narrative. Chapter 12 begins, "Before these things Enoch was hidden, no one of the children of men knew where he was hidden, and where he abode, and what had become of him.", which may be interpreted as the hidden grave of Hiram Abiff. The ending of Chapter 12, "The murder of their beloved ones shall they see, and over the destruction of their children shall they lament, and shall make supplication unto eternity, but mercy and peace shall ye not attain." can clearly be linked to the exhumation of the Widow's Son, and the lack of attainment of that which has been lost to a future generation. Chapter 13:3-4, "Then I went and spoke to them all together, and they were all afraid, and fear and trembling seized them. And they besought me to draw up a petition in the presence of the Lord of heaven" is a potential reference to the 12 condemned Fellow Craft accused of murdering Hiram Abiff.

Additionally, *The Book of Enoch* subtly expresses the most fundamental of masonic principles, that of light. The 3 parables inherent in the text begin and end with light. *The Book of the Luminaries* not only contains light in the title but likewise re-references the link to masonic astronomical light. Genesis notwithstanding, these notations are some of the earliest references to light in the Judeo-Christian tradition. It would appear that just as with any mason, the concept of light is fundamental to the journey of Enoch.

The references to Enoch in Scottish and York Rite Masonry are more apparent. The vault of Enoch plays a fundamental role in the ritual work for both appendant bodies (Hutchens, 2006 & Sullivan 2011). In the Scottish Rite 14th Degree, the vault of Enoch is of vertical orientation which is emblematic of Enoch's spiritual ascent to God (Hutchens, 2006 & Litt 2016). Robert Sullivan in his work, *The Royal Arch of Enoch* argues that with their multiple mentions in York Rite Masonry, the pillars of Enoch (presumably the pillars stabilizing the vault) are as important, though not nearly as referenced, as the pillars of Solomon, for within the pillars of Enoch are stored all the knowledge of the antediluvian world as well as the secrets to the seven liberal arts and sciences. But arguably the most important role Enoch's vault plays in masonic ritual and lore, is that within it lies the cubical stone which bares the ineffable name of God (Pike, 1950). Given that Enoch was chosen by God to ascend with him to heaven in living form, it would stand to reason that if any mere human were to have been bestowed with God's name, it would have been Enoch.

With all of this in mind, is it reasonable to ask the question, was Enoch a mason? Enoch's parables begin and end in light. *The Book of Enoch*, has innumerable allusions to masonic ritual degree work. In apocryphal and Biblical lore, Enoch walked in heaven in the presence of God and presumably knew the name of God. Most compellingly, the name Enoch, means "the Initiator" (Sullivan 2016). It would seem to this researcher that the question, was Enoch a mason, is somewhat "small". Given all that has been exposed in this line of research, a more appropriate question would be, was Enoch the *FIRST* mason?

The Chase Continues

As with any great esoteric masonic research effort, the words “in conclusion” rest somewhere in the rhetorical far-off distance. This particular chase began with motivation to find the pyramids within modern Freemasonry and a fall through the rabbit hole landed on the question “Was Enoch the first mason?”. While this work contains compelling evidence that he may very well have been, it likewise creates more questions than it answers...as is the case with most masonic chases. During this chase I have uncovered a number of curiosities that will inform further research on Enoch:

The Great Pyramid is still in play- *Do the first 10 chapters of Enoch refer to the deserts of Egypt and mysterious builders? When it is stated that Azazel has “rough and jagged rocks placed upon him...covering him with darkness...where he will abide forever”, is it referring to The Great Pyramid? Can you find references to both the river Nile and The Great Pyramid in Chapters 14, 16, 22 and others?*

The Isis Myth- *Is the Isis myth a parallel to the Enoch narrative and consequently to modern Freemasonry? Inasmuch as Isis holds esoteric knowledge, knows the name of deity, and has the power of resurrection, is she a forerunner to our practiced mythology?*

Enoch and the LDS- *Why does Enoch hold a particular prominence in the Mormon Church, whose symbolism mirrors many of the symbols of Freemasonry? Why did a research rabbit hole lead to a paper written by a BYU professor by the name of R. Grant Athay in 1968, titled “Worlds Without Number: “The Astronomy of Enoch, Abraham, and Moses”?*

Hermes Trismegistus- *Who is this enigmatic ancient sage, and why do references to him continue to appear on the chase for Enoch.*

These are just a few tangential questions that popped up during the research for this paper. Each compelling enough to merit its own academic inquiry. Will my continued chase for the elusive Enoch lead down any of these paths? Only time will tell. More importantly where will the chase for Enoch lead you?

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