

Reading Questions for Week 4 (Apocalyptic)

NT Seminar: The Jewish World of the New Testament

Fall 2009

** Be sure to read the sections on this week's texts in VanderKam

- *1 Enoch* 6-36 (*The Book of the Watchers*)
- *1 Enoch* 45-57 (extract from the *Similitudes of Enoch* or *Parables of Enoch*)
- *4 Ezra* (2 Esdras) 3:1-5:20; 7; 11-13

- What are the common features of apocalyptic literature? What biblical books would fit this genre?
- Ask the following questions in relation to each of our three readings. Note where you see differences between the documents and think about why the authors have taken these different approaches.
 - What is the (fictional/historical) setting of each book? Why do you think this setting was chosen?
 - What explanation does each book give for the problem of evil (both human evil and natural evil)? How does this compare with the approach to evil in the NT?
 - What roles are played by good (unfallen) and evil (fallen) angels? How would this knowledge affect the readers? What is the relationship between heavenly (angelic) beings and earthly political powers?
 - How is God described? What aspects of his character are emphasized?
 - What is the role of the seer (Enoch or Ezra) in each narrative? What assignments are given to him? Why do you think this figure was chosen as the pseudonym?
 - What kind of eschatological future does each document anticipate? What happens to the dead in the meantime?
 - What role is played by a deliverer figure in the eschatology of each book? How is that figure described and identified?
 - What kind of cosmology (structure of the universe) is set out in *Watchers*? How is heaven described and how is it related to the earth? Why this emphasis on "cosmic geography"?
 - What is the basis for the judgement of human beings? What sins are singled out for focus? Are particular groups singled out for judgement? Is there any opportunity given for forgiveness? On what basis?
 - How much emphasis is placed on Israel's distinct identity as the "chosen" or "elect" people? What role is allowed for the gentiles?
 - How "sectarian" is this book? Does it envision a division between the righteous and sinful within Israel? If so, how is that boundary defined?
 - How much room is allowed for human free choice and how much is pre-determined by God?
 - How does the author signal to the reader what is symbolic or metaphoric and what is to be taken literally?
 - Does the figure of personified Wisdom appear? What is she like and what role does she play?
 - How do the human beings in these texts relate to God? How would you describe their prayers and "spirituality"?
 - What Old Testament passages or motifs seem to be emphasized and interpreted? Why do you think these passages were chosen?