

## **Never-Before Revealed Secrets of the Bible!**

In 1997, a book called *The Bible Code* was published by a journalist named Michael Drosnin. The point of the book was that the original Hebrew text of the Old Testament contained secret messages, many of which foretold the future.

Sometimes this code could be retrieved by counting “equidistant letters.” Suppose you took every fiftieth Hebrew letter in Genesis (not counting spaces) and then put them together, adding spaces where necessary. It might spell out a secret message! Or here’s another way it might work. Put all the Hebrew letters of a Bible book in rows, with the same number of letters (say 100) in each row, and print them in squares with justified margins. It would look like a Word Search puzzle. Then, just as with a Word Search, you try reading it backwards and forwards, up and down, and diagonally. Amazingly, words appear! By this method, Drosnin found that the ancient Hebrew manuscripts predicted the assassinations of both JFK and Yitzhak Rabin! (In the consonantal Hebrew: YPhK and RBN.) The book sold millions of copies.

But it’s just possible that Drosnin was working with a few suspect presuppositions. For instance, he presupposes that God was involved in the writing of the books right down to the individual letters. He also presupposes that the apparent meaning of scripture – the stories, songs, laws, teachings, and speeches – are at one level just a pretext for other, hidden, messages. And he presupposes that the current events of about the turn of the 21st century were just so darn important to God that the writing of the Bible was shaped by God’s need to insert messages about our time in books written thousands of years earlier. Think about it! The Bible predicts JFK’s death! We must be incredibly important if even the Bible is really all about us!

As I say, I think all these presuppositions are, shall we say, suspect. But Drosnin worked with one other premise, which I believe is accurate. He presupposed that people would uncritically accept any rubbish so long as it had the word “Bible” attached to it. That much, at least, is true.

Why is that? Because we know that the Bible is somehow from God, but we don’t really know what’s in it. Why don’t we know the Bible? Because, let’s face it, it’s hard. It’s written in literary forms that we aren’t familiar with, using strange metaphors, referring to people and places we’ve never heard of. It’s long, and it’s confusing. It already feels like a secret code to us, so Drosnin’s bilge sounds credible.

This fall, we’re going to try to make the Bible more accessible, in two ways. First of all, on Wednesday nights and during Sunday education time, I’ll be repeating my Scripture Core class, surveying the actual content of the Bible and showing how it fits together. Second, in my sermons, I’m going to talk about strategies for approaching the Bible, with sensitivity to its own time as well as to ours. I’m going to talk about what the Bible really is – and what it isn’t. Because the Bible actually matters – not as a weapon or a gimmick, but as a doorway to discovering God yesterday, today, and forever.