

Breaking the Biblical Code

As long as I can remember people have been mesmerized by secret codes and shepherds discovering ancient scrolls in some hidden cave. We clamor to watch movies like Angels and Demons, the Da Vinci Code, National Treasure, The Lost Arc and scramble to get copies of Gospel of Thomas, The Dead Sea Scrolls and writings of Mary Magdalene, supposedly the wife of Jesus.

I am hoping to build upon the clamor for hidden secrets. I plan to throw my hat into the secret arena by sharing true Biblical secrets that seldom reach the public.

The church itself created its own mess concerning a secret Bible. For hundreds of years the Bible was only available to priests and the only one who had final authority on interpreting the Bible was the Pope. It wasn't until Martin Luther posted his 95 theses October 31, 1517, to the castle door that the Bible was made available to the public.

Fast tracking to today there are several Bibles in every home with a choice of hundreds of translations. However, the Bible came with no user manual. There are thousands of Biblical commentaries however the majority of them are written for ministers who seldom share the information with others.

I soon learned that very few clergy took the time to share their Biblical knowledge with those in the congregation. When I tried to up-date Biblical knowledge in the church, I was called the anti-Christ, promoting false doctrines. The sad thing was the Biblical knowledge I was trying to promote was over a hundred years old.

The reasons many pastors choose not to up-date are:

- Keep the people in the pews in the dark

- Anything new might upset those in the pew
- The clergy never accepted the new information seminaries taught
- Some clergy never grasped the new thinking, so they just kept preaching the same old stuff they grew up with.
- Teaching takes time and some clergy refuse to take the effort

Many Christians ground their faith on Moses parting the “Red Sea,” Jesus miraculous birth, walking on water and his physical resurrection. Focusing on the spectacular can lead to a pretty shallow faith plus it leaves those outside the church scratching their heads.

Think of me as the Jack Webb of Biblical history. Jack Webb played Sgt. Joe Friday a hard-nosed L.A. Police Officer on Dragnet. In questioning suspects Sgt. Friday did not want to hear about the holiday tinsel, he was just interested in the bare facts. Friday’s badge number 714 shall be forever be, “just the facts ma’am.”

Please enjoy how I break the Biblical Code. I thoroughly enjoyed the process. For a start, I plan to break the Biblical Code in three areas; the Bible itself, the slaves in Egypt, and crossing the “Red Sea.”

During the summer of 1965 I read as many books as I could get my grubby hands concerning the Bible. Even though I just finished three years at a Biblical college I felt ill prepared for seminary. On September 15th I was dumped off, abandoned in Webster Groves, Missouri by my parents to begin my search into a whole new world of Biblical discovery.

In my first class in seminary, September 20, 1965, the professor’s first words out of his mouth were, “whatever you think you know about the Bible forget it, it is probably wrong anyway.” In one way his words were a relief and at the same time he left me trembling in fear. I felt I

was about to be exposed to a real faith, minus all the Christmas/Easter trimmings.

My knees were shaking the first several months attending classes. Not only was I academically unprepared, and attending a school I never dreamed of, I was walking the same halls two of the greatest theologians of the twentieth century walked, Richard and Reinhold Niebuhr plus sitting in the same classrooms my favorite minister, Philip Krause took notes in.

The original campus of Eden began in Marthasville, Missouri in 1840, later transferred to Wellston Missouri in 1883 and eventually landed in Webster Groves, Missouri in 1924. In 1929 Eden had their first woman student and in 1933 they had their first African American student. The seminary was way out in front of any other seminary.

The main part of the campus at Eden was built in the shape of a horseshoe. Toward the back of the campus was an imposing brick building where classes were conducted, a library, a chapel and spaces for administration and faculty offices. In the middle of the three-story building was an imposing tower reaching the clouds.

On either side of the Administration building were two smaller brick buildings; one housed the male students and the other the female students plus visitors. Just off the main campus was a brick building for married students. That building for married students was a goal all we single students dreamed about.

Class after class I was learning things about the Bible and church history I never heard before. I was forever taking notes, reading books and in awe of what was going on around me. There was a mystery to the campus and every door I entered a new experienced unfolded to me.

Lowell Zuck was my church history instructor. Lowell lived from 1926-2014. The seminary took a bold venture in hiring Zuck in 1955 as the first teacher from another religion to teach, Church of the Brethren. Zuck ended up being the longest serving teacher at the seminary. Lowell was hired as the church history professor and research consultant of the Eden archives.

Lowell was my church history instructor. He was a small man of stature, and he would constantly laugh during his lectures. He either laughed from his own insecurities or he really thought he was funny. I referred to Zuck as the “Forrest Gump” of church archives. Upon his retirement as a teacher, he was in charge of the archives, those hidden, secret documents meant only for his eyes.

HIDDEN SECRETS UNCOVERED

I wanted more than just lectures, I dreamed of finding secrets to the faith. After being on campus several months I noticed on every full moon a small figure sneaking across campus entering the side door to the main building.

One full mooned evening around Christmas I followed the mysterious figure across campus through the side door and down a flight of steps into the basement. As he turned on the light, I noticed it was the “Forrest Gump” of the Biblical archives, Lowell Zuck. The professor was working under a small 60 watt light bulb and he seemed to be paging through ancient manuscripts.

Whenever my required reading assignments eased up, and there was no full moon, I would sneak over to the side door of the administration building with pen and pad in hand I would break into the sacred archives of Biblical mysteries. On every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday the building would remain open in order for the janitors to

clean the rooms. With pen and pad in hand I would walk into the building. With a skeleton key, I would go to the basement and unlock the door to the sacred archives of Biblical mysteries.

Twice while copying ancient scripts, I was almost caught by “pops.” Pops was Orville L. Elbring, business manager, superintendent of building and grounds, mechanic who worked on our cars, a Jack-of-all-trades. Pops was also an ordained minister who graduated from Elmhurst College, cum laude, and Eden Theological Seminary in 1927. Pops served as minister for one congregation from 1928-1930, but had the wisdom to quit ministering to pew sitters to ministering students for forty years. He and his wife always ate with us students.

What I discovered from lectures and the archives I tried to share with the churches I served but I was seen as a troublemaker, a heretic. Now I will try again to share some secrets of the Biblical Code with you, Lovers of Wisdom.

What I am about to share with you would be best if it were shared with no one else for they will never understand what you are saying. The following information comes from three years of lectures from the brightest theologians and what I was able to steal from the basement archives.

1. Biblical Code of the Bible Revealed

To protect the innocent, I will not use quotations. There are still “Christians” out there who would still like to burn heretics at the stake. The facts I am about to share with you are over a hundred years old. Why it remains a mystery still boggles my mind.

To begin uncovering the code, the Bible was not written and passed down to give us laws and stories, not to provide data for history or science, nor to explain all the mysteries of life. The Bible was simply

written to introduce us to the presence of God known through prophets and Jesus.

In reading the Bible, it offers us a fresh way of understanding the world we live in that can lead us to a life of joy and wholeness. Too many have used the Bible to divide people into two camps, us and them, the saved and the lost.

The Bible was NOT dictated by God and passed down to a handful of chosen men. The Bible came about as one generation after another changed its words to fit the times they lived in. Most importantly the Bible is not the Word of God, but you can find the Word of God in the Bible.

When you understand and believe that the Bible was not dictated by God then things like contradictions, bloody wars will no longer upset you. The families who wrote the Bible tried as best they could to interpret and to record the actions of God.

Yes, families wrote the Bible. We have two creation stories written by two separate families. Genesis 1 was written by P, the Priestly family. They were writing between 540-430 BCE. The Priests were interested in cultic matters, and they preferred order and purity.

Genesis 2, the older creation story was written by J the Yahwist tradition. Their God is referred to as Yahweh, they disliked rituals, Adam was human, and they used pictorial language. They wrote between 960 and 950 BCE.

I am very comfortable with two creation stories. I am even comfortable with the idea some of the material for the creation stories came from other cultures. The two creation stories function as one and they show that creation is not just an event but a process.

Too often the church presses the diversity of witnesses into one artificial unity. Hidden texts stressed not conformity but open and honest encounters. These secret texts I discovered at lectures and in the archives hidden in the basement may disturb the comfortable, but it might bring a more realistic look at the actions of God.

I can't stress enough, unless educated pastors share the latest in Biblical scholarship through their preaching, weekly leading an adult Sunday school class and educating their Sunday school teachers anything new will be kept under lock and key. The real losers in these lazy actions will be the people they are serving.

Besides many clergy preaching the old, safe ways, the movie "The Ten Commandments" starring Charlton Heston, has done more to set back Biblical scholarship than any other movie not counting, The Mel Gibson movie, The Passion of the Christ, 2004. This movie is filled with excessive violence and antisemitism.

11. Moses leading the Slaves to Freedom

Besides seeing the Bible as a human enterprise let us uncover the secrets and the truth about the Exodus. While paging through books in the archives I discovered there was much folklore surrounding the birth of Moses. The birth of Moses being dumped in a basket set adrift, being found by Pharaoh's daughter and being cared for by Moses mother herself is a great story. But the birth of Moses echoes the origin of Sargon 1 king of Syria 1200 years prior to the birth of Moses.

There is nothing wrong with religious folklore but basing our faith on these events can be rather shallow and empty.

The slaves under Pharaoh were not just Hebrews but a variety of people. Those making bricks for Pharaoh were called Apiru. The Apiru

were a mixed multitude of landless people, lacking citizenship and some were even paid soldiers.

111 The Crossing of the Red Sea

When it came time for Moses freeing his people he took a small multitude, a motley group, representing the 12 tribes. Instead of 600,000 slaves being free, Exodus 12:37, a number like several hundred would be more accurate.

Egyptian historians only spent two to three lines recording the escape. Granted Egypt, like many countries release events that they only approve.

According to the Bible only two mid-wives, Exodus 12:37 were brought along to help mothers giving birth. There is no way two mid-wives could care for 600,000, not counting women and children.

Folklore has Moses parting the Red Sea where the slaves crossed on dry land and when the pursuing army tried to cross with their horses and chariots the sea closed, and all were drowned.

Over a hundred years ago it was being taught that the crossing was not the Red Sea but the Sea of Reeds. The Sea of Reeds, Lake Timsah, was a marsh not far from the Red Sea. The escaping slaves poorly equipped easily passed through the marsh. However, the pursuing army with horses and armament got stuck in the marsh. To cross over the Red Sea would have added hundreds of miles to their trip.

Moses departing with several hundred slaves did not shake the foundations of Egypt. We need to read scripture as tradition not history. In reading these folklores we need not be concerned with what historically took place but how it affected the community itself.

Several months following the death of Lowell Zuck, on July 30, 2014, I received a letter from Lowell's wife. She informed me that Lowell was fully aware of my sneaking into the archives. At first, he was upset with my break ins and threatened to flunk me. But once he understood my need for the truth, he was very pleased.

My faith rests not in spectacular crossings or a book passed on down to me that was dictated to humans. My faith rests in a God who is ever present, ever acting.

This material is only a fraction of the material I discovered.

Denn is Siebert

Biblical code breaker