



The Resurrection Code by Mark Stibbe - a review

Tim Davy

The Resurrection Code: Mary Magdalene and the Easter Enigma

By Mark Stibbe

Authentic Media. 154 pages. £7.99

ISBN 978-1-86024-491-9

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Encrypted message?

Mark Stibbe's latest book focuses on John's resurrection account and offers an accessible, close reading of the passage which, he says, cracks some of the 'codes' embedded in the fourth gospel.

A number of issues are addressed, including the identity of the 'beloved disciple'; the curiously detailed description of the arrangement of Jesus's grave clothes; the significance of the two angels in the empty tomb; and the reason why Jesus tells Mary not to touch (or cling to) him.

While writing in a popular style, Stibbe (a noted John scholar) is clearly very knowledgeable about the theology and literary character of the book. He illustrates well the beautifully crafted nature of the fourth gospel. His attentive reading of the text and his sensitivity to interpretive questions, such as John's use of 'gaps' which draw the reader into the story so effectively, is to be commended. He also does well in reflecting upon the significance of Mary Magdalene in a balanced, yet challenging way.

Although Stibbe does ask good questions of the

text, I was not always convinced by his answers, which were at times a little speculative. While I understand the book is in part an apologetic against *The Da Vinci Code*, I think framing the discussion as unlocking codes was unnecessary and distracting. John clearly does use Old Testament symbolism in his writing, but I am not sure describing his Gospel as an 'encoded or encrypted text' (page 16) sends the right message.

Nevertheless, even if one does not agree with all of the conclusions, *The Resurrection Code* offers a very good case study in attentive Bible reading for preachers, or for anyone wanting to read the Bible better.

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