

26-0729wc Neighborly Apologetics

Dr. Del Tackett's Neighborly Apologetics Webinar Series

26-0729wc - NA- 9-Jesus' Resurrection, Part 7, Dr. Del Tackett

This detailed summary by Grok / X, (Transcription by TurboScribe.ai)

Del's site: deltackett.com, [Neighborly Apologetics Series Video link](#),

Class Resources: [NA-links](#), Our website: wschurchofchrist.org/education.php

See the transcript: [Transcript HTML](#) - [Transcript PDF](#)

Neighborly Apologetics Summary

26-0729-Summary: 9 - Jesus' Resurrection, Part 7 (0:04 - 56:25)

Title: *The Charge of Contradiction*, **Facilitator:** Scott Reynolds

Part 1

(0:04 - 2:45) Greeting and Overview of Tonight's Focus

Del Tackett opens by thanking the facilitator Marc Fey and greeting the participants, expressing appreciation for their time. He notes that the group has taken a short break from the main series to address a couple of other webinars examining cultural threats that he sees aligning in the present day. Tonight the series returns to the neighborly apologetics material and continues the examination of the resurrection. The specific topic is the common accusation that the resurrection accounts contain numerous contradictions regarding numbers, events, times, and places. Tackett acknowledges that the discussion will not flow as smoothly as he would prefer because it requires dealing with each individual claim in turn. He explains that the following session will attempt to gather all the details into a single harmonized picture of the events surrounding the resurrection, with the goal of giving listeners greater comfort and confidence that the biblical record is inerrant and trustworthy. He observes that many accusations circulate and lodge in people's minds and hearts even when those people have never carefully examined the evidence. Motives often underlie such charges, motives that are not grounded in fact, reason, or logic. The evening's aim is therefore to present the facts and a reasonable way of explaining the alleged contradictions.

(2:45 - 5:00) Reminder of the Neighborly Apologetics Approach

After sharing his screen, Tackett reminds the audience that the series belongs to the category of neighborly apologetics rather than academic apologetics. Academic work remains valuable because it supplies the answers believers need when deep relationships lead neighbors to ask hard questions. The answers, however, are to be given in keeping with the royal law of loving one's neighbor. God has entrusted the primary work of the kingdom to ordinary Christian families, filling them with His Spirit and His Word so that they can build relationships with those providentially

placed next door. In the context of trusted relationships, believers intercede fervently for their neighbors, praying that questions will arise which their own worldviews cannot answer. Those questions may open the door to conversation about the resurrection. As believers exercise their priestly role by bringing neighbors' names before the throne of God, they are also called to give a defense for the hope that is within them. Tonight's focus is therefore the charge a neighbor may raise concerning the apparent mismatches of events, places, and times in the resurrection narratives, and the need to look carefully at those points and offer a reasoned answer.

(5:00 - 7:30) Series Context and the Centrality of the Resurrection

Tackett places the present discussion within the larger neighborly apologetics series, noting the various categories already covered or still ahead. The group earlier skipped ahead to category nine because of its foundational importance; that material will be referenced repeatedly in later sessions. Within the broad category of the person and work of Christ, the series has already treated the promise of the coming Messiah, the prophecies, the life of Christ, His words, His works, and His death. Attention has now turned to the resurrection. Tackett stresses that the resurrection stands at the very heart of Christian apologetics. History itself is divided by the event into the eras before and after Christ. Paul declares that if Christ has not been raised, then both the apostolic preaching and the believer's faith are in vain—an extraordinarily strong statement. He continues that if Christ has not been raised, faith is futile and people remain in their sins. These claims underscore why so much time is being devoted to the subject.

(7:30 - 9:35) Recap of the Early Polemic and the Creed

Looking back three months to the point at which the series paused, Tackett recalls the importance of the early polemic and the early creed. These elements must remain in the minds of believers. The polemic—the point-and-counterpoint debate over the empty tomb, the charge that the disciples stole the body, and the claim that the guards had been bribed—arose immediately, at the very time of the resurrection itself. It is therefore not the product of a legend that developed over successive generations. The same is true of the creed preserved in Paul's letter to the Corinthians. That creed is a statement of belief formulated to counter a challenge concerning the resurrection, and Paul was already transmitting it within a matter of years after the event. The rapid appearance of both the polemic and the creed makes impossible the accusation that the resurrection story is a late-developing myth or legend.

(9:35 - 11:20) The Framework of Alleged Contradictions

Tonight the focus shifts to the charge that the resurrection accounts contain contradictions in timing, events, places, and numbers. Tackett adopts a framework taken from an online source that lists four principal accusations. The overarching claim is that the resurrection narratives cannot be trusted precisely because of these contradictions. The four points are: (1) one account says the women left while it was still dark, another says they left at dawn, and still another says the sun had risen; (2) one account mentions one angel, another mentions two, and another speaks only of young men; (3) one account says the women told the disciples what they had seen, while another says they told no one; and (4) one account has Jesus instructing the disciples to go to Galilee, while another has them remaining in Jerusalem. Tackett regards the last of these as the most critical and difficult and therefore reserves it for later treatment. He begins with the first accusation—the timing of the women's visit to the tomb.

(11:20 - 13:45) The Timing Accusation and the Stance of Inerrancy

The four Gospel accounts are placed side by side. Matthew records that the women came to look at the grave as it began to dawn. Mark says they came to the tomb very early when the sun had risen. Luke places their arrival at early dawn. John states that Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb while it was still dark. On the surface these statements appear to conflict. Before addressing the details, Tackett affirms the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture in the original manuscripts. That conviction drives the careful examination of supposed contradictions. The accounts are treated as pieces of a single jigsaw puzzle that may at first glance seem not to belong together. Often only an intervening piece is needed to show that the pieces do in fact fit. Because the Word of God is trusted as true, the task is to seek those intervening pieces so that the harmony of the record becomes clear.

(13:45 - 19:40) The Nature of Dawn and the Phases of Twilight

Tackett turns to the physical realities of dawn itself. Dawn is not instantaneous like the flipping of a light switch. Light begins to appear long before the sun itself rises above the horizon because of refraction through the atmosphere, the presence of clouds, and the spectrum of light. He illustrates with a photograph taken at sunrise in New Zealand. Scientifically, the period before sunrise is divided into stages. When the sun is more than eighteen degrees below the horizon the sky is considered dark. As the sun climbs between eighteen and twelve degrees below the horizon, astronomical twilight begins; at this stage starlight begins to be obscured. Between twelve and six degrees the period is called nautical twilight, still dark enough for major navigational stars to remain visible. Between six degrees and the horizon itself is civil twilight, when there is enough light for ordinary outdoor activity. Technical sunrise is defined as the moment when the center of the sun's disk reaches the horizon. Because Jerusalem lies at approximately 31.77 degrees north latitude, the duration of each phase can be calculated for that location. On the morning in question, astronomical twilight would have run from about 4:56 a.m. to 5:27 a.m., nautical twilight from 5:27 a.m. to 5:56 a.m., and civil twilight from 5:56 a.m. to 6:20 a.m., with sunrise occurring at 6:20 a.m.

(19:40 - 26:16) Resolving the Apparent Contradiction in the Timing Accounts

Returning to the Gospel statements, Tackett groups the phrases “as it began to dawn” (Matthew) and “at early dawn” (Luke) as subjective descriptions that simply place the events somewhere within the twilight period; they do not conflict with one another. The sharper contrast is between John's statement that Mary Magdalene came while it was still dark and Mark's statement that the women came when the sun had risen. The resolution lies in distinguishing the moment of departure from the moment of arrival. John is describing Mary's leaving her lodging while it was still dark—most naturally during astronomical or early nautical twilight, perhaps around 5:30 a.m. Mark, by pairing the words “very early” with “when the sun had risen,” appears to be summarizing both the early departure and the later arrival. By the time the women reached the tomb the upper edge of the sun's disk would already have appeared, placing the arrival within civil twilight, when one can legitimately say the sun had risen. Additional geographical detail supports the timeline. The lower city of Jerusalem, where Mary Magdalene and other women may have been staying, lay nearly a mile from the tomb. The women would have needed time to gather, to stop at other homes, and to walk the distance. Leaving while it was still dark and arriving after the sun's disk had broken the horizon therefore forms a coherent and natural sequence. When the accounts are read in this light, the supposed contradiction disappears.

Part 2

(26:16 - 29:30) Second Accusation: One Angel or Two, and the Number of Women

Tackett turns to the second major accusation concerning numbers. One account records a single angel, another records two, and still another refers only to young men rather than angels. He recalls a personal experience in a formal debate in which an opponent used precisely this set of differences to argue that the details of Scripture cannot be trusted and that one should therefore look only at the larger picture. Tackett pairs this charge with a related numerical question often raised: how many women went to the tomb? John's account appears to feature only Mary Magdalene; Matthew mentions two; Mark lists three; Luke appears to include at least five. He begins with the women before returning to the angels.

(29:30 - 33:50) Hermeneutics Rule Nine: Historical Narratives Are Always Partial

Before examining the texts, Tackett introduces a foundational hermeneutical principle he calls rule nine: historical narratives are always only a partial account. He illustrates the point by noting the virtually infinite number of events occurring on any given day in any city or county—rabbits running, dogs barking, airplanes flying, wind blowing, people planting or picking flowers. A historian must be highly selective. The Gospels, which cover the entire life, death, and resurrection of Jesus in only a handful of pages, necessarily omit vast amounts of detail. A partial historical record is not therefore a false record. The biblical writers have the right, under the guidance of the Spirit, to select what they will include. Accusing an account of falsehood merely because it does not mention every participant or every detail is illegitimate.

(33:50 - 36:21) Application to the Women and a Possible Scenario

Applying the principle, Tackett notes that Matthew names Magdalene and “Aunt Mary,” Mark adds Salome, Luke adds Joanna and “the other women” (implying at least two more), and John focuses solely on Magdalene. None of the writers claims to be giving an exhaustive list; none says “only these women came.” Therefore the accounts do not contradict one another. Tackett then sketches a geographically plausible scenario. Jesus' mother may have been staying in Bethany with Lazarus's family; Aunt Mary may have been with her; Magdalene may have been lodged in the lower city; Salome and Joanna may have been in the upper city. The women could therefore have set out from different locations and arrived at the tomb at slightly different times, having arranged to meet there. John's exclusive focus on Magdalene is simply a legitimate narrative choice, not a claim that she alone was present.

(36:21 - 39:30) Resolving the Angel Accounts

The same principles resolve the angel passages. Matthew mentions one angel whose garments were white as snow. Mark describes a young man in a white robe speaking inside the tomb. Luke records two men in dazzling apparel. John, again focusing on Magdalene's experience, speaks of two angels in white. An author is under no obligation to mention every figure present; if only one is speaking, the writer may legitimately focus on that one. Moreover, Scripture itself frequently refers to angels as men. Tackett cites Acts 1, where two men in white clothing appear at the ascension and address the disciples. Every resurrection account that mentions these figures also describes white or dazzling garments, reinforcing the identification. Referring to angels as young men or men is

therefore no contradiction.

(39:30 - 42:10) Third Accusation: Did the Women Report or Remain Silent?

The third accusation concerns whether the women told the disciples. Matthew records that the women left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report to the disciples. Luke states that they returned and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest, having been instructed by the angels to do so. John, again limiting himself to Magdalene, records that she came and announced to the disciples that she had seen the Lord. Mark, however, ends its account of the women by saying they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. On the surface this appears to be a direct contradiction.

(42:10 - 47:40) A Plausible Resolution Involving Multiple Groups

Tackett proposes a reasonable historical reconstruction that removes the contradiction. A substantial number of women—perhaps half a dozen to a dozen—had followed Jesus and intended to anoint his body. They were lodged in different parts of the city and therefore set out in smaller groups, planning to meet at the tomb. Magdalene, starting early, may have been overtaken by the earthquake recorded in Matthew; she could have sprinted ahead while her companions lagged. She arrives, finds the tomb empty, and runs to tell Peter and John. The remaining women of her party continue, are joined by the group from Bethany, enter the tomb, encounter the angels, and receive the command to tell the disciples. Some of the women, however—particularly those who had been left alone and terrified—may have fled in fear and said nothing, precisely the detail Mark records. Meanwhile the larger group obeys the angelic instruction and reports to the disciples. Tackett also notes the textual issue surrounding the longer ending of Mark; many scholars believe the original ending was lost and that the abrupt conclusion we possess may reflect only the fearful response of one subgroup. In any case, the existence of multiple parties arriving and reacting at slightly different times supplies an intervening piece that harmonizes the accounts without contradiction.

(47:40 - 52:30) Fourth Accusation: Galilee or Jerusalem, and Luke's Telescoping

The final and most difficult charge concerns geography and timing. Matthew appears to present both the angels and the risen Jesus instructing the women to tell the disciples to go to Galilee, where Jesus will meet them; the disciples seem to go, and Jesus delivers the Great Commission there. Mark records the same angelic instruction. Luke, however, appears to compress everything from resurrection to ascension into a single day in Jerusalem and has Jesus charge the disciples not to leave the city until they are clothed with power from on high (Pentecost). John places appearances in Jerusalem on the evening of the resurrection and again eight days later (with Thomas), then records a later appearance to seven disciples by the Sea of Tiberias in Galilee. The puzzle pieces seem irreconcilable until one turns to Luke's second volume. In Acts 1:3 Luke explicitly states that Jesus presented himself alive by many convincing proofs over a period of forty days. The Gospel of Luke has therefore telescoped events that actually spanned weeks; it never claims they all occurred on the same day. Telescoping is a normal historiographical technique and removes the apparent contradiction.

(52:30 - 56:53) A Coherent Timeline Incorporating the Feast

With the telescoping recognized, a coherent sequence emerges. Jesus appears to the disciples in Jerusalem on the evening of the resurrection (without Thomas) and again eight days later (with Thomas). Only after the Feast of Unleavened Bread—itself treated like an extended Sabbath during which travel was restricted—do the disciples journey to Galilee. There Jesus meets them repeatedly over the remaining portion of the forty days, including the shore appearance and the appearance to more than five hundred. At some point Jesus directs them to return to Jerusalem; there he gives the final charge to remain until Pentecost and then leads them out to Bethany, from which he ascends. The disciples' delay in leaving Jerusalem is readily explained by the ongoing feast. All four Gospel accounts fit within this framework once partial reporting and telescoping are taken into account. Tackett emphasizes again that rule nine remains decisive: no account is erroneous merely because it does not record every appearance or every journey.

(56:53 - 59:50) Closing Remarks, Resources, and Prayer

Tackett announces that the next session will attempt a full harmonization of all the resurrection events, times, and places, including details not treated tonight, using the map already introduced. He stops sharing his screen and turns the meeting back to the facilitator, Marc Fey. Fey thanks Tackett, notes that an email the following day will contain the recording, a link to Tackett's article on hermeneutics, and information about the Cosmic Cube resource. Questions may be sent by reply to that email. The next webinar is scheduled for the first Tuesday of June; registration will be required to receive the live-stream link. Tackett then closes in prayer, thanking God for the opportunity to gather, asking that anything said in error be erased and that what is true remain, and encouraging the participants to keep the royal law by building relationships with their neighbors, praying for them, and being prepared to give a reasoned defense of the hope they possess. The session ends with mutual thanks and a blessing.