

26-0610wc Neighborly Apologetics

Dr. Del Tackett's Neighborly Apologetics Webinar Series

26-0610wc - NA- 9-Jesus' Resurrection, Part 4.3, 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

26-0610-Summary: 9 - Jesus' Resurrection, Part 4.3 (0:04 - 51:52)

Title: *Witnesses of the Empty Tomb*, **Facilitator:** Scott Reynolds

Part 1 - (0:04 - 3:30) Introduction and Context of Neighborly Apologetics Series

Del Tackett begins with greetings to the audience and mentions he will send the slides as a PDF to Mark for distribution. He explains that this session is part of the Neighborly Apologetics series, which differs from classical academic apologetics by focusing on how everyday Christian families can engage their neighbors relationally when questions arise. The goal is not to win arguments but to respond gently and respectfully within deep relationships, as Scripture instructs believers to always be prepared to give a defense for the hope within them, rooted in the royal law of loving one's neighbor. Tackett references Paul's emphasis on loving one's neighbor as the fulfillment of the law of Christ.

He introduces the Engagement Project as an initiative to help the body of Christ impact culture by fulfilling their priestly role as a royal priesthood in their neighborhoods. God has entrusted the primary work of the kingdom to ordinary Christian families. This is the driving motivation behind the series. The current session is Part 4 in the apologetics discussions on the claims of Jesus and the resurrection. Specifically, the topic is the witness of the empty tomb. Tackett notes they previously covered evil and suffering (category 1) and have now reached category 9, which addresses who Jesus is. Prior sessions examined the promise and prophecy of the Messiah, Jesus' life, and his words, leading now to his death and resurrection.

(3:31 - 7:45) The Central Importance of the Resurrection-the Empty Tomb as Concrete Evidence

Tackett reminds participants that the resurrection of Christ is the heart and key of Christian apologetics, a constant theme in the apostles' writings. While the church has sometimes de-emphasized it, it must be central when building relationships with neighbors. He recalls how even the world recognizes that Jesus' death and resurrection split history. Paul powerfully states that if Christ has not been raised, preaching and faith are in vain, and believers remain in their sins. Families need a firm understanding of this to discuss it effectively.

The session focuses on the empty tomb and its witnesses. Tackett emphasizes that the empty tomb is one of the most concrete pieces of evidence in apologetics. Unlike complex theological debates, it is a straightforward historical reality: the tomb was either empty or it was not. He references how this evidence ultimately convinced Lee Strobel, who examined the work of legal scholar Sir Norman Anderson. Anderson concluded that the empty tomb forms a "veritable rock" against which all rationalistic theories of the resurrection dash themselves in vain.

(7:45 - 10:46) Categories of Evidence: Direct and Indirect (Circumstantial)

Tackett poses the key question: How do we know the tomb was empty? He outlines two categories of evidence—direct and indirect (often called circumstantial). Using the analogy of someone leaving a bouquet of roses on a dining room table, he explains direct evidence as video footage showing the act (an eyewitness account). Indirect or circumstantial evidence includes sightings at a flower shop or driving by the house. While convictions should not rely solely on circumstantial evidence, it powerfully supports sufficient direct evidence. There are technical interruptions with background noise and video adjustments involving Margie.

He plans to cover three direct evidences and three indirect ones. The indirect evidences include the guards, the bribe offered to them, and the fact that the corpse was never produced. The session proceeds to examine the direct evidences starting with the angels.

(10:46 - 14:05) Direct Evidence: The Angels at the Empty Tomb (Matthew 28)

Tackett acknowledges that some people may not believe in angels, a topic to be addressed later, but notes that many do believe in them. The angels appear in the historical Gospel documents as direct witnesses to the empty tomb. When speaking with a neighbor like "Mrs. Smith" who doubts the empty tomb, one might find she accepts angelic testimony. He reads from Matthew 28: After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the tomb. A violent earthquake occurred as an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, rolled back the stone, and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, his clothes white as snow. The guards shook with fear and became like dead men. The angel told the women not to fear, confirmed they sought the crucified Jesus, declared "He is not here; he has risen, just as he said," and invited them to see the place where he lay.

Tackett highlights the earthquake (to be referenced again with the guards), the angel's dramatic appearance, the guards' terror, and the angel's clear testimony that the tomb was empty, inviting inspection.

(14:05 - 17:40) Direct Evidence: The Women as First Witnesses

Tackett describes the testimony of the women as one of the most fascinating direct evidences. In that culture, women were not considered valid witnesses, making their role as the first to receive news of the resurrection and see the risen Jesus highly significant. This detail strongly argues against the accounts being fabricated myths or legends, as no one inventing a story in that context would feature women prominently as primary witnesses. It testifies to the authenticity of the documents.

He reviews passages, noting the women looked into the tomb per the angel's invitation. From Luke 24, the women (including Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and others) found

the stone rolled away, entered, and did not find Jesus' body. They reported this to the apostles. Multiple women—potentially up to a dozen who followed Jesus and prepared spices—witnessed the empty tomb. They arrived via different routes at varying times, but the Gospels confirm several entered and saw it empty.

(17:40 - 22:02) Clarifying the Identities of the Marys

To avoid confusion due to multiple Marys in the crucifixion and resurrection accounts, Tackett clarifies their identities. He identifies five main references but proposes there are really three distinct women. Mary the mother of Jesus; her sister (also named Mary), who is the wife of Clopas, mother of James and Joseph, and referred to as "the other Mary"; and Mary Magdalene. He suggests calling them Mary (mother of Jesus), Aunt Mary (her sister), and Magdalene.

Supporting evidence comes from John 19:25 at the cross: near Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister (Mary the wife of Clopas), and Mary Magdalene. Greek scholars often interpret this as three women, not four. Tackett explains this convention helps modern readers, as contemporaries would have known the distinctions clearly. He mentions using this in his articles, which are being compiled into a hoped-for book.

(22:02 - 30:59) Direct Evidence: Peter and John at the Empty Tomb, Grave Clothes, and Map Explanation (John 20)

Tackett calls the detailed account from Peter and John one of his favorites, providing vivid evidence of the empty tomb. Reading from John 20: Early on the first day of the week, while still dark, Mary Magdalene found the stone removed, ran to Simon Peter and the beloved disciple (John), and reported the body had been taken. Peter and John ran to the tomb. John arrived first, looked in, saw the strips of linen but did not enter. Peter entered, saw the linen strips and the cloth that had been around Jesus' head, still lying in its place, separate from the linen. John then entered, saw, and believed.

The tomb was empty of the body but contained the grave clothes. Tackett explains the burial custom: linen strips wrapped with spices (about 75 pounds of aloes and spices creating a sticky cocoon) around the body, and a separate cloth wound around the head. The head cloth remaining in place (not fallen) indicates no body was pulled out, as there was no neck connecting it. This sight convinced John. Tackett notes possible collapse due to spices but emphasizes both wrappings were empty.

He displays a map (improved by his nephew) using the traditional Calvary site. Magdalene (at point A, the tomb) runs to Peter and John (likely at different locations, B upper room area, with Peter possibly lower city at C due to shame). She alerts them, they run back (red line route), examine the tomb. Magdalene likely follows. This ties into her later encounters. Tackett stresses the incredible, detailed testimony and notes others (women, and later indirect witnesses) also saw the empty tomb and grave clothes. This transitions toward discussing the indirect evidence.

Part 2

(31:02 - 33:26) Indirect Evidence: The Guards at the Empty Tomb (Matthew 28)

Del Tackett turns to the indirect or circumstantial evidence, beginning with the guards. He references Matthew 28, which they had discussed previously in connection with the seal on the tomb. Some of the guard went into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had taken place. The chief priests had contracted with the guards to secure the tomb. Tackett finds it significant that the report included "all that had taken place," which he interprets as describing the earthquake, the angel-like figure in white who single-handedly rolled back the stone, and—most importantly—that the guards had looked inside and found the tomb empty.

When the chief priests assembled with the elders and took counsel, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers and instructed them to say that Jesus' disciples came by night and stole the body while the guards were asleep. They promised to satisfy the governor if the story reached him and keep the soldiers out of trouble. The soldiers took the money and spread the story, which has circulated among the Jews to this day. Tackett argues that the only reason for this bribe was that the tomb was indeed empty and the guards had seen it. It would have been obvious that, after the stone was rolled away and the seals broken, the guards would have inspected the tomb and reported its emptiness to the chief priests.

(33:26 - 36:30) Indirect Evidence: The Bribe and the Failure to Produce a Corpse

Continuing with the same passage, Tackett explains that the bribe itself serves as strong indirect evidence of the empty tomb. The chief priests and elders faced their worst nightmare: despite stationing guards because Jesus had predicted his resurrection, the body was now gone. The guards reported an angel rolling away the stone, breaking the seals, and the missing body—possibly even mentioning the empty grave clothes. This desperate bribe to fabricate the theft story confirms the tomb's emptiness.

The third piece of indirect evidence is simple yet powerful: a corpse was never produced. The easiest way for the chief priests, elders, and Pilate to end the resurrection claims would have been to produce Jesus' body. Tackett recalls a movie (possibly titled something like "The Centurion") depicting soldiers searching rotting corpses in a grim attempt to find Jesus' body after the crucifixion, darkened sky, and empty tomb. It makes sense that the authorities had every incentive to locate the body to quash the story, but they could not. The Gospel of Matthew notes that the false story continued to be spread among the Jews "to this day," which would not have persisted if a body had been found.

(36:30 - 40:37) Broader Implications: Others Who Would Have Investigated the Tomb

Tackett summarizes that the three direct and three indirect evidences should be straightforward for families to learn and share with neighbors like "Mrs. Smith." He notes that while no corpse was produced, the risen body of Jesus did appear, which will be the topic of the next session. He encourages a family discussion: who else would have gone to check the tomb? He believes the chief priests would have investigated after the guards' report of the angel, earthquake, and empty grave clothes (possibly collapsed from the spices). The elders likely did the same.

If someone stole the body, why remove it from the linens instead of taking the wrapped body? Tackett points to Jesus' widespread fame from the Sermon on the Mount accounts—teaching, healing diseases, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics across Galilee, Syria, Jerusalem, Judea, Decapolis, and beyond the Jordan. Great multitudes followed him. His triumphal entry with palm branches and hosannas, confrontations with religious leaders, arrest, and trial made him well-known. The events of crucifixion darkness, earthquake, opened tombs, and resurrection rumors would have drawn crowds. Even a shopkeeper, believer or not, and Joseph of Arimathea (who owned the tomb) would have checked. Possibly hundreds or thousands visited, yet no one produced evidence that the tomb was not empty.

(40:37 - 45:23) Counterarguments Against the Empty Tomb and Why They Fail

Tackett briefly examines common objections, describing them as "clutching at straws," though he has heard them and neighbors might repeat them. He covers four tonight out of seven. The first is that the disciples stole the body—the very lie the guards were bribed to tell, still circulated today. This is implausible: Roman guards faced death for failing duty (including sleeping on watch). Scared disciples, hiding in the upper room after the crucifixion, lacked courage or opportunity to move the heavy, sealed stone noisily.

The second is that someone else stole the body. The third is that the body was moved to another tomb. These fail because the chief priests, elders, and Pilate desperately wanted the body to stop the spreading resurrection news in Jerusalem; a sealed Roman tomb with guards made theft or relocation nearly impossible. The fourth is that the women went to the wrong tomb. But Peter and John also went and found the same empty tomb with grave clothes. Joseph of Arimathea would not have forgotten his own tomb, especially after preparing the body and witnessing rigor mortis. All these arguments collapse under scrutiny.

(45:23 - 48:34) The Significance of the Grave Clothes and the Power of the Empty Tomb Evidence

Tackett returns to the powerful reality of the tomb: it was empty of Jesus' body but contained the grave clothes, as testified by Peter and John. Many others, including the women and likely hundreds or thousands, would have seen this. Disciples may have visited multiple times until convinced. Eventually, someone removed the clothes, but the evidence was overwhelming.

He reviews the Jewish burial custom: linen strips wrapped around the body with about 75 pounds of spices and aloes, creating a sticky cocoon, plus a separate cloth wound around the head (same terms used for Lazarus). This explains why the head cloth remained in its place, separate—there was no body connecting it. The empty tomb and these undisturbed grave clothes provide incredible, concrete evidence. Tackett finds both the emptiness and the presence of the clothes remarkable and convincing, supporting that Jesus, who was crucified, dead, and buried, has risen just as he said. This will connect to the next session on the appearances of the risen Lord.

(48:34 - 51:52) Closing Application, Q&A Transition, and Prayer

Tackett reminds everyone that this material is not for winning arguments or putting people down, but for loving neighbors with sacrificial zeal—building trusted relationships so that when questions arise, believers can respond with gentleness and respect. He hands the session back to Mark. Marc

Fey thanks Dr. Tackett, addresses minor background noise issues, thanks attendees, and announces that the recording and PDF slides will be sent out. He mentions the Engagement Project link and invites questions.

Dr. Tackett closes in prayer, thanking God for the opportunity to discuss these truths, asking for encouragement and help in engaging neighbors justly and respectfully, and praising God's Word. The session ends with thanks, well-wishes for the next month, and goodbyes.