

## 7—Evidence of the Resurrection: The Gospel Reports

Matthew 27-28; Mark 15-16; Luke 23-24; John 18-20

1. In this lesson, we want to look at the resurrection reports through the eyes of a journalistic reporter. Melvin Mencher of Columbia University notes seven factors which help a reporter identify a “newsworthy” story. Based on these factors, does the resurrection qualify as newsworthy? Why?

2. There are some basic rules to first-rate reporting. #1: *Check your facts*. How many sources verify the empty tomb?

- 1) *Impact*. Reports that have a significant influence on the public.
  - 2) *Timeliness*. Reports on events that have occurred quite recently—because “news value diminishes with time” (p. 58).
  - 3) *Prominence*. Reports that involve famous people or institutions.
  - 4) *Proximity*. Reports that have some close geographical, ethnic, economic, or other “angle” that establishes a close personal connection to the typical reader.
  - 5) *Conflict*. Reports that feature confrontations between individuals, organizations, or institutions. The conflict may also occur inside an individual—such as anguish over a personal tragedy or a personal search for truth or meaning.
  - 6) *Surprise*. Reports that highlight activities, ideas, or people that are especially unusual or strange.
  - 7) *Currency*. Even if an issue or condition has been around for years—such as poverty or child abuse—it may become newsworthy because of a new public interest in the subject.
- (Mencher, Melvin. *News Reporting and Writing*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown Publishers, 1991, 57-60).

3. There are some basic rules to first-rate reporting. #2: *Tell the other side of the story*. What statements are found in the following passages which indicate some of the disciples were not quick to believe the resurrection report (see Luke 24:9-11; John 20:24-31; Luke 24:13-32)?

4. *There are some basic rules to first-rate reporting. #3: Name sources of quotations and facts*. Who are some of the named sources within the resurrection accounts (John 20:14-18; Matthew 28:1; Mark 15:47-16:1; Luke 24:10-12; John 21:1-25; Acts 1:13-14)?

5. *There are some basic rules to first-rate reporting. #4: Keep your prejudices out of the story.* In the following passages, how does Matthew avoid inserting his own prejudices into the writing as he reports the resurrection story (Matthew 28:16-17; Matthew 27:65, 28:11-15)? What honest remark does John note about his reporting in John 21:25? What would a prejudiced writer have possibly done?

6. *There are some basic rules to first-rate reporting. #5: Ask tough questions.* As Luke begins his gospel, what does he say about how he has acquired much of his information (Luke 1:2)? Was he present when Jesus appeared to Cleopas and his friend (Luke 24:13-35)? So, how would he have acquired his info?

7. *There are some basic rules to first-rate reporting. #6: Include realistic quotations and dialogue.* It may be easy to “make up” quotes to help tell a story. Do the following conversations sound real (John 20:16, 25; Mark 16:6; John 21:15-19)?

8. *There are some basic rules to first-rate reporting. #7: Expect your story to sound different from other reporters covering the same event.* Writing a completely identical story looks like plagiarism or collusion. While the gospel records have similarities, are they exactly the same? What would we expect if multiple people told the same story?

9. *There are some basic rules to first-rate reporting. #8: Accounts by good reporters covering the same story should not be contradictory.* We must distinguish between differences and contradictions. Can you think of some “contradictions” some try to point out about the resurrection?

10. A journalist’s story is often expected to answer the 5 W’s. Below, briefly use the gospels to document the resurrection story in journalistic form.

- Who does this story involve?
- What happened?
- When did it happen?
- Where did this occur?
- Why did this happen?
- How did this happen?