

# Easter Sunday: How Can I Know the Earth is Round?

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Preacher: Martin Ayers

[ 0 : 00 ] Our first reading is taken from Luke chapter 24, and that can be found on page 1061 in the Church Bibles.

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright, the women bowed down with their faces to the ground.

But the men said to them, Then they remembered his words.

Brilliant. So why is Easter so special?

[ 1 : 23 ] We're going to be exploring that today, and it's going to be to answer a very simple question. Can we know for sure? Can we know for sure that there is a God? Can we know for sure that Jesus is for real?

And can we know for sure that there is life after death? To help us think about that during our talk, I'm going to tell you a story. It's a parable. It's like a story that helps us understand the true story of what happened with Jesus.

I'm going to tell you about the parable of the flat earthers and the round earthers. You see, many years ago, when your great-grandparents were just a twinkle in their great-grandparents' eyes, there was a big argument in the noble city of Glasgow.

It was between the flat earthers and the round earthers. And just for today, we're going to recreate that great big argument. And you can tell today whether you're going to be a flat earther or a round earther by looking at your service sheet.

So if you haven't got a notice sheet with you, you can look over the sheet of the person next to you, and you just go with them. Now, if you've got a square on the front, a little square, so I've just borrowed one that's a circle here.

[ 2 : 39 ] If you've got a square down here on the front of your notice sheet, the square is because you're a flat earther. You believe the world is flat right now. Go with me. Okay? If you've got a circle, it's because you already believe the earth is round.

All right? Enlightened. Now, if you're a flat earther, I want you to cheer when I say the words flat earther. Let's try it. Flat earther. Yay! Golly.

Okay. There's a lot of flat earthers in Glasgow. Let's just try that again, and I'll have a look. Flat earther. Yay! Yay! Wow. Okay. Now, I think I saw one over there, so I'm going to just go and talk to one of them.

Okay? I saw you cheering. Okay. I think I heard you cheering as a flat earther. Is that right? Yeah, that's true. Yeah. That's true? Okay. I mean, it's pretty obvious, isn't it? Well, why are you a flat earther?

Well, I mean, if the earth was round, I mean, all the folk in the bottom bed would just fall off, wouldn't they? All the folk at the bottom would just fall off? Yeah. So, I mean, if it's round, yeah.

[ 3 : 40 ] They'd be upside down as well, wouldn't they? They'd be upside down. They'd be upside down. And they'd fall off, yeah. Okay. Thank you very much. Very obvious. Very interesting. So, that's, well, Killy is your nickname, isn't it?

We know why. So, Flat Earth Killy over there. Flat Pat Killy, we'll call him. Flat Pat Killy. Okay. And that's his view. And a lot of people thought that Flat Pat Killy's view made a lot of sense.

They were called the Flat Earthers. Yay! Come on. Keep thinking. Okay. Then, of course, you've got the Round Earthers. Cheer if you're a Round Earther. Cheer!

Not bad. Oh, dear. There aren't many of them, are there? They're just trying to make up for it. Okay. Let's bring up one of the Round Earthers. You over there. I saw you cheering. If you come up. Okay.

Colin is a Round Earther. So, here's Round Earth Colin. Hiya. Welcome, Round Earth Colin. You think the Earth is Round, do you? Yes, I do, actually. Yes.

[ 4 : 39 ] Okay. Well, there's a lot of people out there who disagree with you today. Oh, that's okay. That's fine. Okay. I think... The Flat Earthers... Yay! They think you're off your rocker, basically.

I know. That's all right. That's okay. I think I can prove it, actually. I've come up with an idea to prove it. You're going to prove that the Earth is Round. Yeah, yeah. I'm going to prove it. How are you going to do that? Well, I thought... I was thinking about it just as you were talking about it.

I thought, if I just walk in this direction, and I keep walking, and then I'll probably have to get a boat, and I'll keep walking, and then if I come back to this very spot here, then we'll know it's Round.

Okay. And that's what happened in the parable of the Flat Earthers and the Round Earthers. Okay. Someone set off to prove it, so we could all know the answer. Right, Colin?

So, you're going to need a few things. Yeah. If you're going to go on that trip. All right. So, we've got a rucksack here, okay, because you're going to have to walk with your belongings for a long time. And what have we got in here? We've got a map, because you're going to have to find your way.

[ 5 : 37 ] Make sure you don't get it wrong. Yeah, that's useful. We've got a scarf there. Posh scarf, actually, Colin. Posh scarf. And then a hat there. All right. Thank you. Okay. All right. And then we'll get your rucksack on.

Right, okay. You feel all set? Have you got what you need? Yeah, I think I've got it. Yeah, yeah. Okay. Yeah. Well, let's give Colin a cheer. All right. Hey, off you go, Colin. Bye-bye. Off he goes.

Okay. So, how can you know whether the flat earthers or the round earthers have got it right? You need someone to prove it, don't you? And it's got something to do with the first Easter, right?

Let's think about that true story we had read from the Bible. How confusing would that have been? Do you remember who it was about? It was about Mary Magdalene. She was with some other women. She was with Salome and Mary, the mother of James and Joanna and others.

And they went to the tomb thinking they'd find the body there. They're thinking, who's going to roll the stone away for us? And they get there and the large stone had been rolled away.

[ 6 : 42 ] It had gone. And the tomb is empty. Jesus isn't there. And they think someone's stolen the body. Someone's stolen Jesus' body. But suddenly two angels appear to them bright as lightning.

And they say, why are you looking for the living among the dead? He is not here. He has risen. Remember how he told you while he was still with you in Galilee, the Son of Man, that's Jesus, the Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified, and on the third day be raised again.

Then they remembered his words. They were confused, but they could see amazing things. And they remembered Jesus' words. Eventually they go and tell the other disciples, but the other disciples don't understand either.

And Peter goes to the tomb and he goes in. And do you remember, what does he find? What does Peter find? He finds the strips of linen, doesn't he?

He finds the grave clothes. It must have been so confusing. What on earth was going on? But we need to get back to the parable of the flat and the round earthers, okay?

[ 7 : 53 ] You see, the round earthers started to get a bit worried about their friend Colin and what had happened to him. So they sent out a search party, all right? And I think we ought to do that for Colin. We ought to have someone go and look for Colin.

So I need a very brave volunteer who's willing to go out and look for Colin. I'm just looking around for a volunteer, someone who's looking brave. Okay, could be anyone, couldn't it?

Let's go over here. Why don't you do this for us? Okay, can you go and have a look for Colin for us? Is that okay? So you just go out the door. We saw which way he went. You just bring him back because I think it's gone too far, the whole experiment.

Okay, off you go. If you just bring him back in, bring him back in. Go the way he came. He'll be there. Bring him back in.

Don't go too far. We might need another search party. Oh, oh. Where's Colin?

[ 9 : 00 ] Colin? He's not there. Just his stuff. Where was this? It was just out there. Golly, that's quite confusing.

Thank you. Applause for our brave volunteer. Went looking for Colin. But hang on a minute. His hat, his coat, and his scarf have gone.

And there's a letter to St. Silas from Colin. Let's have a look. Let's read the letter. You slightly preempted me there, Andy. I haven't opened it yet. Hang on.

It says, Dear everyone at St. Silas, I've left my woolly hat and big coat. I won't need them where I'm going.

But don't worry. I'll see you back at church. Love and kisses. Colin. He's a nice boy, isn't he, Colin? Great.

[ 10 : 01 ] Okay. Well, that's very confusing, isn't it? We're looking for Colin, but he wasn't there. We must have been looking in the wrong place for Colin. I wonder if you can see what that has to do with the very first Easter.

Jesus' friends were looking for Jesus, weren't they? But they were looking in the wrong place. They were looking in the tomb where dead people are because they thought they were looking for a dead person.

And the angel says, Why are you looking for the living among the dead? And what did they find in the tomb? They found the grave clothes. Now, why were they there? It's because Jesus didn't need them anymore where he was going.

Those were the clothes that a dead person wears, and Jesus didn't need them. It's a bit like, you know, when you get up in the morning, what do you do with your pajamas? You know, when you get dressed, you fold them up neatly, don't you, and put them under your pillow.

That's what you do with your pajamas every day. Is that what you do? I'm sure you do. Okay. But the reason you don't take your pajamas with you is because you don't need them where you're going.

[ 11 : 00 ] Why not? Well, we're going to hear more about it in a moment. But first, we're going to sing again. We're going to sing a great song that tells the whole story, See What a Morning. So let's stand on our feet and let's sing together.

Well, please do take a seat, and we're going to find out what happens next on that amazing first resurrection day. And Alan has got our next Bible reading. It's continuing in Luke chapter 24 from verse 36.

We're on page 1062 in the church Bibles. 1062. Verse 36.

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, Peace be with you. They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost.

He said to them, Why are you troubled? And why do doubts rise in your mind? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself.

[ 12 : 11 ] Touch me and see. A ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have. When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet.

And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, Do you have anything here to eat? They gave him a piece of broiled fish and he took it and ate it in their presence.

He said to them, This is what I told you while I was still with you. Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets and the Psalms.

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the scriptures. He told them, This is what is written.

The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day. And repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

[ 13 : 18 ] You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my father has promised. But stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.

Brilliant. Thank you, Alan, very much. So we are back to the story, though, for a moment, of the story of the flat earthers and the round earthers.

Now, at this point, after a long time had passed and no one had heard anything from Colin, people started to think they'd never see Colin again. And the flat earthers started to tell everybody that Colin had just fallen off the edge of the world and that they'd been right all along.

And it was very sad, actually. But at least now everyone knew that the world is flat. Okay? Yeah, that was good, yeah. The flat earthers are feeling confident.

Okay. I wonder what's happened to Colin, actually. Hello? Hello? Hang on a minute. What's that? Oh, Martin! Colin! Hello? It's Colin!

[ 14 : 30 ] Oh, my goodness! Colin! I've made it back! I thought we'd lost you forever! I know, I thought I'd got lost as well, but I made it! Look at the state of you! I know! Come to the front! Oh, thank you! I was getting worried that we'd lost you and I was going to have to explain to Anna that, you know, the illustration had gone wrong and it would have been a sad thing.

It would have been sad. So what happened? You went out in that direction. Yeah, well... But you've come in that direction. Yeah, so I just kept walking in that direction and then I had to get a bow and then I found myself in this land of, like, strange people and they all did strange things.

I brought back some stuff to show you about it. Wow, look, you've got... So you've got a flag here from this distant country. Strange place I went to. And you've got some special sandpaper that they use in that country when they're playing cricket.

They just rub the ball. Yeah, they told me about that. When no one's looking. Yeah, see that? Yeah. They gave me this hat. And then, yeah, a hat to keep the flies away and the outback. That's amazing. I know, very strange. And then I just kept walking and then I just came through here and ended up where I started.

But that means that you were right, Colin. Yeah. It proves that the earth is round. I know, the earth is round. It proves it. It's actually an oblate spheroid, okay?

[ 15 : 37 ] But we're not going to do that today. Okay, we have an answer. The earth is round, which means that the round earthers were right. In fact, we're all now. We became round earthers. Yeah.

Okay. Brilliant. Let's give Colin some applause. And are you going to sit down? I think I might go have a lie down. I'm quite tired. You're quite tired. Yeah, I'm going to go have a rest actually.

You have walked quite a long way actually. So you go and have a rest. Okay. And there we have it. The parable of the round earthers and the flat earthers and that's how it ended. Now, one man went away and because he went all the way around and came back, everyone could know for sure that the earth was round.

Now, we do have some historians in our congregation, okay, and I know that's not quite what happened, okay, but you just have to work with me for today. Go with me. It's a parable because it helps us understand the first real Easter.

Jesus went away, dead, definitely dead, and they put him in the tomb. They know which tomb it is and no one thought they'd ever see him again. Even though he told them he was coming back, even though when you look in the Bible with your eyes open by the Spirit, you can see it's promised that Jesus will come back.

[ 16 : 45 ] It was so weird to them, it was just so obvious to them that when you die, you stay dead. So the idea that Jesus would be alive again was just unthinkable for them.

Dead people don't rise and then Jesus came back from the grave. He rose from the dead, not as a hallucination as people saw him because groups don't see the same thing together, not as a ghost because he was real and they could touch him and he even ate fish with them.

He ate meals with them. Mary saw him, his disciples saw him, hundreds of people saw him and they touched him and they ate with him. And that's why Easter is such wonderful news.

Peter tells us this, who saw Jesus alive again. He says this in the Bible, give praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his great mercy, he has given us a new birth and a living hope.

This hope is living because Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Jesus has broken the power of death. He smashed death to bits and he proved that when he came back to life, he proved that we can.

[ 17 : 52 ] We can have a life that goes on forever, a life with God in paradise. All you have to do is trust Jesus as your savior. Now that is fantastic news.

It may be that today you feel frightened about death. It might be that you're very sad about death. It might be that you're very sad about someone who has died. Well, know that Jesus is alive and if you ask him to be your savior, he can give you life forever.

He's smashed death to bits. It's true. Or it may be that you've come to church this morning because you kind of come at Easter time because it's what people do at Easter. But you didn't really think it was possible to know for sure whether there's a God or whether there really is life after death.

Maybe you think, well, it's a nice thing to believe but I'm not sure I believe it. Well, Jesus Christ has risen. The tomb is empty and his disciples saw him again and they touched him again and they went out into the world willing to die for that as though they had no fear of death anymore.

Which means we can know for certain that Jesus is the way to life forever with God. And it might be that you're someone here today who feels like following Jesus has cost you an awful lot.

[ 19 : 05 ] It might be that you're someone who even just the time that you give to being a Christian, the things that you're doing, looking at, teaching at the children's work, teaching with the youth ministry, serving, giving your money, giving money and seeing friends who don't give their money to support gospel work and thinking, oh, how different my life would be.

Have I really got it right? All this living for Jesus. It affects maybe who you marry or that you've stayed single or where you've lived or maybe you were thinking of going abroad and you start thinking, is it really worth doing all of this for Jesus?

Is it really true? And we can know today that it is true because Jesus rose from the dead. The tomb was empty. He was seen alive again and all that cost is worth it.

The more bonkers your life looks to someone who doesn't believe Jesus rose from the dead, the more right you've got it because he rose from the dead. What's coming is so certain.

We look at Jesus alive again and we know we're going to get the same thing. It's a bit like, you know when you have an Easter egg hunt, okay, people hide the chocolate eggs, don't they?

[ 20 : 09 ] And you have to try and find the chocolate eggs. And we do that in our back garden. But yesterday already, one of our daughters, Bethany, was starting to say where mum would hide the eggs.

She's remembered from last year. And if she's really sneaky, she'd maybe go up into an upstairs bedroom and look out the window and maybe she would see where the eggs get hidden. Now if you see where the eggs are in the garden before the hunt, it's like you're so certain of what's coming.

You just look at the eggs and you think, oh yeah, scrumptious chocolate on my way. I can already see it. And when we look at Jesus and his alive body again that people saw, we think, yes, my body will last forever.

I can have life forever. It's coming because people saw Jesus. Now that should be the end of it, okay? But you know what? I'm sorry to say that, you know, we've looked at the flat earthers and the round earthers, okay?

And we saw how Colin coming back gave the evidence that people could be sure that the earth is round. Well, that's not actually what happened. There's a bit of a sting in the tail of that parable.

[ 21 : 13 ] There's a bit of a twist. You see, some of the flat earthers refused to believe that Colin really had come back. They ignored him in the street. They thought it was all a big hoax, all just made up.

He hadn't really gone around the world and come back. They'd spent so much of their life thinking that the earth had to be flat, they just weren't willing to accept the evidence that said, no, you were wrong, it was round.

The evidence was staring them in the face. In fact, last week, Mike Hughes, who still thinks the world is flat, okay, has launched a rocket. You see this in the news?

And he eventually hopes to launch one that goes far enough that he can look down and prove that everyone else is just winding us up and the earth really is flat. And the Flat Earth Society has got followers.

It recently tweeted this, extraordinary, the Flat Earth Society has members all around the globe. Isn't that absolutely extraordinary? It's pretty silly, isn't it?

[ 22 : 10 ] It's pretty silly not to accept that the earth is round. But why is it silly? It's silly because of all the evidence. But at least for the Flat Earthers, it was just about whether or not the earth is round or flat.

It would be much worse, wouldn't it, to do that about the most important question we'll ever face. Is there life after death? Is God really there? Does he want to know us? Does he care how we've lived?

These key questions for life, wouldn't it be terrible to ignore the evidence and miss out on the truth? In God's great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Let's pray. Let's pray. It's such a special prayer. Let's put our hands in the air and we'll do a wow prayer. Okay, hands in the air. Wow. Father God, we thank you for the living hope you've given us by raising Jesus from the dead.

Thank you that people saw him alive again, that the grave clothes were left behind because he didn't need them anymore. Thank you for life forever on offer through him as our Savior.

[ 23 : 12 ] We thank you that he came for us, he rose for us, and for the hope it gives us for all of life. Wow. Amen. Amen. Amen.