

251 *Journeying... how (not) to get lost*

As Christians we're on a journey (the early church was known as 'The way'), and so we need a map to guide us. It's OK, we have the Bible! We read it, apply it, and never get lost. Yeh, right!

Did Jesus tell people they needed a map? He was immersed in the Jewish Scriptures, and he would certainly have known the teachings of the Pharisees, but he tended to say, 'You have heard it said... but **I** say to you...' Sounds like he was claiming to *be* the map: 'I am the way.'

So the people had a *law*-based map, but Jesus was advocating a *person*-based map.

Jesus told the Pharisees off, good and proper, because they even **added to** the law, creating fear-laden burdens. We can *see* that's wrong.

Did the early church have a map? Well, they had the Jewish Scriptures, and you can certainly sense their excitement, starting from the two on the Emmaus road: 'Didn't our heart burn within us as he opened the Scriptures?!' Jesus had come to **fulfil** the law. Hallelujah!

The law's purpose was to point to Jesus, and to be a *temporary* guide^[250] but they now had a *person-based* map for their journey – Jesus.

All OK now? No! Galatians shows how quickly you can get the map upside down. Paul told the Galatians that they were lost ('you wit-less lot!') because the Judaisers had told them that, yes, Jesus is the way, but you **also** still need this bit of the law (circumcision).

Jesus taught (and modelled) that you interpret the law (see how it applies today) according to how it affects our relationships with one another and with God – a person-based map. We no longer keep *every* injunction of the law – and we certainly don't (well, we shouldn't) load fear on people for not sticking to our (my? the church's?) interpretation of the law. So where we differ, we must still love and accept one another.

And remember that we're currently using a (translation of a) 2000-year-old map, so we need to take very great care how we read it and interpret it. As I've said before, in those 2000 years, God has enabled us to learn more about the world in general and the human condition in particular, and so we have (sometimes dramatically) changed our interpretation. Thank God!

Also, I've reminded us that language changes. For example, if we were to study *only* the AV translation, we would soon get very lost, by ignoring (a) 300+ years of biblical scholarship, (b) the huge changes in the meaning of (English) words. Yet there are people still in our churches who quote AV verses (out of context) to try to tell us the(ir) way to go.

Is your map person-based, or is it law-based? Is it based on faith (trust) or is it based on fear? If you are insisting that your particular interpretation is right, how is that interpretation affecting other people?