



Scriptures and Doctrine :: Coals of Fire

Coals of Fire - posted by Nasher (), on: 2005/4/11 9:43

Proverbs 25:21-22

If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; For in doing so, you will heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord will reward you.(AMP)

In the Amplified version of the Bible it has the following Footnote for verse 22:

Proverbs 25:22 This is not to be understood as a revengeful act intended to embarrass its victim, but just the opposite. The picture is that of the high priest (Lev. 16:12) who, on the Day of Atonement, took his censer and filled it with "coals of fire" from off the altar of burnt offering, and then put incense on the coals to create a pleasing, sweet-smelling fragrance. The cloud or smoke of the incense covered the mercy seat and was acceptable to God for atonement. Samuel Wesley wrote: "So artists melt the sullen ore of lead, By heaping coals of fire upon its head: In the kind warmth the metal learns to glow, And pure from dross the silver runs below."

Can anyone elaborate / explain / refute this?

Perhaps Romans 12:19-21 is a help to us?

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Re: Coals of Fire - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/4/11 13:46

Quote:
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Can anyone elaborate / explain / refute this?

My initial reaction is that all this sounds very strained. The link with the altar of incense seems very odd.

Re: - posted by Nasher (), on: 2005/4/11 13:50

Hi Ron, what would you say the coals of fire signify?

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/4/11 15:56

Quote:

-----Hi Ron, what would you say the coals of fire signify?

The difficulty is that no-one wants to think in terms of 'revenge', believing that such would be an unworthy motive. There are some Psalms referred to as 'imprecatory psalms' where the psalmist calls judgement down upon his enemies. There is a section in Ps 45 Psa 45:3-5 KJV

(3) Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.

(4) And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.

(5) Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee. which Charles Wesley transposed in a wonderful way in a hymn...Sharp are the arrows of Thy love,

And pierce the most obdurate heart:

Their point Thine enemies shall prove,

And strangely filled with pleasing smart,

Fall down before the cross subdued,

And feel Thine arrows dipped in blood' What is interesting here is that while some today would advocate preaching God's fierce judgements and fire of hell, Wesley has transposed it into another 'key'.

My instinct is to do the same with this metaphor. A metaphor is not an allegory. In an allegory there may be many points of similarity, but in a metaphor (and in a parable) there is really a single point in mind. What would be the single point of the 'coals of fire on the head'? un-ignorable impact? The original imagery may well have been with a punitive aspect but I think now we are just left with the 'un-ignorable impact'.

Some of the illustrations that the Lord used in parables could easily be misconstrued if we treated parables as though they were allegories. His 'coming as a thief at night' does not mean He will come illegally, or at night, or that he will steal the video machine, but simply 'without warning'.

How do you see this?

Re: - posted by Nasher (), on: 2005/4/12 9:16

I see the whole passage of Romans 12:9-21 as an expanding of "love your neighbour" and the last bit especially as "love your enemies".

My first question is "who is my enemy?"

Is it someone who hates me?

Is it someone who hates God?

Re: Coals of Fire, on: 2005/4/12 13:58

I have a note in my bible on a post it note under Romans 12:20 quoting from someone (I'll find out who later). It says;

In the middle eastern culture of the day hospitality was the bottom line as far as social custom was concerned. Thus, if your enemy were hungry you would give them something to eat, thirsty a drink. What was meant by the words 'for in doing so thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head' was that if his fire were to go out he could not cook his food, no matter how hungry he was, nor could he warm himself, or have any source of light. By allowing him to bring round his brazier, which he would carry on his head, as was the custom, you would express your love in action by heaping burning coals from your fire on his head.' LOVE IN ACTION.