



Does God Get Angry?

FaithBuilder 2 | Lesson 1 | Lord

Lesson Overview

1. Read

Does God Get Angry?

2. Choose an Activity

Role Playing: Zeal Masquerading as Anger p.2

Brainstorm Appearances and Realities p.3

New Church Concept Anger

Anger is a reaction to everything that stands in the way of self-love and the desires that go along with it. This can clearly be seen in the realm of evil spirits, where anger directed to the Lord is pervasive, because the inhabitants have no charity but only hatred. Whatever does not favor self-love arouses opposition, which displays itself in anger. *Secrets of Heaven* 357

The Lord

The Lord never curses anyone. He does not even get angry. It is we instead who curse ourselves by turning our backs on the Lord. *Secrets of Heaven* 1093

In various stories in the Old and New Testaments the Lord appears to get angry and lash out at people—especially when they are not doing the right thing. The New Church teaches that the Lord *never* gets angry—so why does He appear to be angry in the Word? Let's look at what the Word says and find out how New Church teachings help us understand this apparent contradiction.

In the New Testament Jesus speaks harshly about people called the Scribes and Pharisees.

But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men.... You pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith.... Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.... Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? Matthew 23:13, 23, 25, 33

The Pharisees were experts on Jewish law (the laws of the 5 books of Moses) who believed in an oral (spoken) tradition as well as the written Word. They believed in a strict literal interpretation of the Law, for example actually taking “an eye for an eye” if someone had done wrong. Their interpretations became the Jewish commentary called the Talmud. The Scribes also studied the 5 books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). They wrote their own interpretations and added their own traditions to its meaning. Both groups of people interpreted the Word literally and ignored the *spirit* of the law.

Jesus ended his angry words with a tender picture that showed that He really loved and cared for the people:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!... I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’” Matthew 23:37-39

The Writings help us understand the psychology of anger. Anger wells up inside us when something attacks or threatens what we love and want.

Although Jesus appeared to be angry, He was not really angry. The Writings for the New Church have a word for behavior that appears as anger but really comes from a love for what is genuinely true and good. This word is zeal.

Everyone gets angry when his love and the delight of his love are attacked. This is the cause of all anger. What a person loves is his life, so to hurt what a person loves is to hurt the person's life, and this causes the person to become upset or angry. It is similar with good people when their love is attacked, but they have zeal, not anger. This zeal indeed is called anger in the Word, but it is not really anger. On the inside it is nothing but charity, goodness, and mercy. Therefore zeal does not, like anger, continue after the person towards whom it was kindled repents and turns away from evil. Anger with evil people is different. It conceals hatred and revenge inwardly in itself. See *Apocalypse Explained* 693.2

New Church Concept Zeal

Zeal harbors a goodness born of neighborly love, so when it fights, it merely removes those intent on falsity and evil, to prevent them from harming anyone devoted to goodness and truth. Anger, on the other hand, not only removes them but also pursues them with hatred and revenge. Zeal, motivated by the neighborly love it contains, wishes well even to people intent on evil and falsity, and it treats them well, too, so far as they refrain from hurting good people. Anger, motivated by the hatred and vengefulness it contains, wishes ill to everyone it fights, whether that other is good or evil. *Secrets of Heaven* 8598.2

ACTIVITIES

Choose one or more of the following activities.

Role Playing: Zeal Masquerading as Anger

When the loves of good people are attacked,
they respond with zeal rather than anger.
Inwardly, this is charity, goodness, and mercy.
see Apocalypse Explained 693:2

- Brainstorm a list of situations in which a person's actions look like anger but might actually be motivated out of concern for another person's well-being. An example might be the way a mother responds when a little child is lost and then found or the way a coach talks to his team at half-time.
- Make up a skit to illustrate one of the scenarios, then perform it for the group.
- After each dramatization, discuss whether there are other ways the person could communicate concern without coming across to others as angry.

Brainstorm Appearances and Realities

Take 5 minutes to brainstorm things that may have a different appearance from the reality alone or in groups. These can be appearances in the natural world (such as that the sun moves around the earth), ways people behave (for instance an adult yelling at a child who is in danger of being hit by a car), or what a passage in the Word is teaching us (such as Exodus 32, when the Lord says “Leave Me alone so that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them...”). Write down your ideas. When you have finished, share your ideas with others.

<i>The Appearance</i>	<i>The Reality</i>
E.g. The sun moves around the earth.	E.g. The earth moves around the sun.