## Hating the Prophet

Edited from H. E. Phillips

All through the history of man in sin, the word of God has always had two effects upon man: it makes him repent and turn to righteousness, or it makes him hate the message and the prophet. When Ahab was king of Israel, he followed a very wicked course and gathered about him many false prophets who would prophesy as he desired. This is very much like religious conditions in the world today. The preacher who dares to speak what God has revealed on all matters, especially when it condemns the general practice of people, becomes the object of hate.

*And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, there is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so* (1 Kings 22:8).

Ahab was not the last man to hate a prophet because he did not speak good concerning him. This attitude was characteristic of Israel all through their history. Stephen concluded his discussion with the Jews in the Synagogue with these words: "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers" (Acts 7:52). For these words Stephen was killed by the mob.

The setting of the statement in 1 Kings 22 shows that the king of Israel had designs against another king and wanted the help of Jehoshaphat in the effort. He already had the death sentence passed against him by Elijah because of his crime of greed and murder. His evil wife, Jezebel, had developed a plan which he carried out to have Naboth killed because he wanted his vineyard. When Elijah told Ahab that "in the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs like thy blood, even thine" (1 Kings 21:19). Ahab replied to Elijah: "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"

Paul inquired of the Galatians, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16). Why is it that a man can be corrected -- told the truth -- about many other matters, but makes you his eternal enemy for telling him the truth about God's word? A stranger can be stopped on the street and told that he is going into danger if he keeps on in the direction he is going, and he will thank you and take another course. But your best friend can be sinning against God and if you tell him about it he will, in many cases, become your enemy.

Maybe the answer to this strange behaviour lies in the nature of religion itself, and in the fact that most people do not like to be considered ignorant of such important matters. Most people think of religion as a thing so personal that it should not be changed. They think of it as a sort of heritage that belongs to their ancestors. For this reason it is an insult to tell them that they are wrong.

Men do not like to appear uninformed in the basic and important matters of life and eternity, but the terrible truth is that the great majority of this age are ignorant. To try to tell one the truth when he considers himself informed enough to know, it is an insult.

But neither of these reasons appear in the case of Ahab's hate for Micaiah. It was a clear case of a man wanting to do a thing but not wanting to reap the consequences. He wanted to be told that he would be victorious in spite of the fact that he knew a prophet had told him he would die. Those today who want to hear "good" about themselves when they are doing those things that are wrong are in the same class with this evil king.

It will be observed that the truth was not changed because several hundred prophets spoke "good" of the king, nor was it changed because the king hated the prophet and had him put in prison. It is the same today. The truth remains the truth whether we believe it or not, and even if we hate the preacher.

## Avoiding the Truth

by H. E. Phillips

"Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth" (John 9:31).

The above statement from John 9 was made by a man who had received his sight by a miracle of Christ. The man was born blind and seems to have been known by all of that community as a blind beggar. When the neighbors first recognized him as the blind man, now having his sight, they did the very natural thing of asking how his sight had been restored. He told about the man "called Jesus" who had anointed his eyes with clay and then told him to wash in the pool of Siloam. He said, "I went and washed, and I received sight." Now the matter comes before the religious leaders who must do something to discredit the powerful miracle that confirmed the truth that Christ was the Son of God.

The procedure of the Pharisees to avoid the truth demonstrated by this miracle is being followed in principle by religious leaders today. Every conceivable plan has been used by denominationalism to avoid the truth of the gospel. Some of these plans follow the same line as that of the Pharisees on this occasion.

1. Show contradiction. The Pharisees ignored the fact of healing and its infallible proof, and tried to prove that Christ was a sinner because he healed on the sabbath day. It was their own rules of the sabbath keeping that were being violated by the works of Christ, but this made no difference to them; their sabbath was more sacred than the truth demonstrated in the miracle. Those religious leaders today who do not want their laws in religion violated use the same method of showing truth to be contradictory. The man who teaches "faith only" salvation seeks to show that obedience in baptism is a contradiction of verses that attribute salvation to faith: setting one verse against another such as John 3:16 against Acts 2:38.

2. Refuse facts. The Pharisees refused to believe that this man had been blind and was now seeing. They called his parents to try to prove their point. Today one can read a clear, complete, and plain statement from the word of God and it will be refused by the one who does not want to believe the truth. This can also be proved by the "salvation by faith only" advocates. Watch them reject the facts clearly stated in Mark 16:15-16 and 1 Peter 3:21.

3. Intimidate and threaten. The Pharisees had put fear in the hearts of the people by threatening to cast out all who confessed Jesus. The Jews did not want to be cast out of the synagogues so they would seek to please the religious leaders. This fear caused the parents of the blind man to refuse to answer their questions about how their son had received his sight. There is no doubt but that multitudes of people close their eyes to the truth because of intimidation from their religious leaders. This has become true even among members of the church in some sections. Will you be denied a search for the truth and acceptance of truth by the intimidation of preachers and other religious leaders and teachers?

4. "The Big Lie". One of the methods of promoting communism was to continually repeat a lie until the people accepted it as truth. The Pharisees simply said Jesus was a sinner. To say this long enough and loud enough is to convince some people. The miracle was ignored. Jesus was a sinner because the Pharisees said so. Today a certain thing is labeled true or false just because the religious leaders say it. Catholicism demands that people receive what it says as the infallible truth regardless of what God's word says. Lying is a great weapon in the hands of influential religious leaders to avoid the truth of the gospel.

This man who had been blind refused to accept anything but the truth as he knew it. None of these plans worked with him. This should serve as an example to us today. Seek the truth of God and hold it.