with God, because many false prophets have gone forth into the world.” (1 John 4:1) Accordingly, there would be need among the restored remnant of spiritual Israelites to guard against false prophets invading or rising up in the midst of their spiritual estate on earth.

18 How, then, did Jehovah keep their “land” or spiritual estate pure in worship by fulfilling His promise: “Also the prophets and the spirit of uncleanliness I shall cause to pass out of the land”? (Zechariah 13:2) It was by causing any wrong understandings of the Bible prophecies that had been entertained before the remnant’s reinstatement in their “land” in 1919 C.E. to be corrected. The “time of the end,” the “conclusion of the system of things,” that began in 1914 at the end of the Gentile Times was God’s appointed time for the fulfillment of many prophecies. These could not be understood until they were just about to be fulfilled or after they had been fulfilled. So in the light of all that was taking place since 1914 the reinstated remnant looked anew into the prophecies that God had reserved for the “time of the end” for their fulfillment. (Daniel 12:4; Revelation 10:6, 7) This included a restudy of the books of Ezekiel and Revelation, an explanation of which had been attempted and published in July of 1917 in the book entitled “The Finished Mystery.” Thus the restored remnant heeded the words:

19 “We have the prophetic word made more sure; and you are doing well in paying attention to it as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until day dawns and a daystar rises, in your hearts. For you know this first, that no prophecy of Scripture springs from any private interpretation. For prophecy was at no time brought by man’s will, but men spoke from God as they were borne along by holy spirit.”—2 Peter 1:19-21.

20 Any attempted interpretation of prophecy, if it proved to be incorrect in the light of historic events and the clearer understanding of the Bible, was corrected, regardless of who had offered the interpretation. Loyalty to God and to his inspired Word was the issue here to be met. So, as an illustration of the loyalty required, even if a fleshly son should offer a wrong interpretation of divine prophecy and should insist in it, like a false prophet, then his own fleshly parents in their loyalty to God would have nothing further to do with him on a religious basis. Christian parents could not do as under the Mosaic Law covenant, namely, have him put to death; but they could pronounce him spiritually dead to themselves in spite of their parenthood of him physically. In this way, figuratively speaking, they “must pierce him through because of his prophesying.” (Zechariah 13:3; compare Deuteronomy 13:1-5.) With their full consent, such a false prophet would be expelled; disfellowshipped, from the Christian congregation. By such loyalty on the part of all members of the restored remnant, the “prophet” of falsehood would be made to pass out of their “land.”

21 Yes, too, the “spirit of uncleanness” would thus be made to pass out of their spiritual “land.” If that spirit were an inspired expression of uncleanness by a would-be prophet or was any tendency, trend, or inclination to uncleanness, it would be disapproved and resisted by the loyal ones. As a consequence any uncleanness as to religious teaching or as to moral behavior would be forced to pass out, under the driving force of God’s holy spirit. The God-given spiritual estate must be maintained as a “land” where clean, Scriptural living is carried on. Persons spiritually and morally unclean must be disfellowshipped therefrom.—2 Corinthians 6:14 to 7:1; compare Deuteronomy 13:6-18.

RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY EXPOSED

22 Jehovah, the God of the true prophets, will put all false prophets to shame either by not fulfilling the false prediction of such self-assuming prophets or by having
His own prophecies fulfilled in a way opposite to that predicted by the false prophets. False prophets will try to hide their reason for feeling shame by denying who they really are. They will try to avoid being killed or being pronounced spiritually dead by Jehovah’s loyal worshippers. He foretold this by having his true prophet Zechariah continue on to say:

"And it must occur in that day that the prophets will become ashamed, each one of his vision when he prophesies; and they will not wear an official garment of hair for the purpose of deceiving. And he will certainly say, ‘I am no prophet. I am a man cultivating the soil, because an earthling man himself acquired me from my youth on.’ And one must say to him, ‘What are these wounds on your person between your hands? And he will have to say, ‘Those with which I was struck in the house of my intense lovers.’"—Zechariah 13:4-6, NW; JB; NE; NAB; contrast Amos 7:14-17.

Thus Jehovah foretold that his people, in their "land" of restoration, would be so well instructed with his Word and would be so loyal to Him and His true prophets that they would refuse to be friends and intense lovers of any false prophet. If they did not kill him, then they would discipline him and strike him so hard in their indignation that visible wounds and scars would result. Such marks on his person, yes, on his breast which would be partly exposed, would betray his identity in spite of the fact that he had discarded official garments that he had assumed to wear as a bona fide prophet of Jehovah God. From whom had he got such scar-producing wounds? From his intense lovers, whether these were his own fleshly parents or his intimate associates. However, their intense loyalty to Jehovah as the God of true prophecy would be stronger than their till-then intense love for a deceptive prophet. They would place love of God and his inspired Word above personal friendships with fleshly relatives or associates. Such a course would cause "the prophets and the spirit of uncleanness" to pass out of the "land" of Jehovah’s repatriated people.

This course of supreme loyalty to the Sovereign Lord Jehovah has been the one adopted by the anointed remnant since 1919 C.E. This has resulted in the disfellowshipping or excommunicating of religious apostates or rebels from the theocratic organization that Jehovah the heavenly Theocrat has established among his obedient remnant. The loyal remnant have found out that it is not the mere “official garment of hair,” not a professional uniform or type of dress, that makes a true prophet of the one living and true God. That is why they have left Babylon the Great, including Christendom, with its distinctively garbed religious priests, preachers, monks and nuns. What makes a true prophet of Jehovah today is his true Christian personality as his identification and his loyal adherence to Jehovah’s Word and its prophecies. It is no wonder, then, that Jehovah’s witnesses while acting as ministers of God’s Word wear plain business suits or the regular attire of the common people. So the loyal remnant are willing to brush aside intense love for close associates and to inflict spiritual "wounds" upon those in disapproval and rejection of apostates. This has kept their theocratic "land" a spiritual realm of clean godly living.

**STRIKING THE SHEPHERD CAUSES A SCATTERING**

Jehovah’s greatest prophet on earth was struck and wounded to the death, but this was for his proving to be a true prophet of the Most High God down to the end. (Deuteronomy 18:15-22; Acts 3:13-23) His violent death caused a short-time scattering of his disciples who were loyal to him. The true prophet Zechariah was used to foretell this, for God went on to say to him: "‘O sword, awake against my shepherd, even against the able-bodied man who is my associate,’ is the utterance of Jehovah of armies. ‘Strike the shepherd, and let..."