

Violence on the United States Border: Mexico's Drug Wars

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*—Revelation 22:15,
J. B. Phillips
Translation*

THESE PROPHETIC WORDS

were recorded by John the Revelator nearly two thousand years ago, and describe those immoral individuals who will not have obeyed the righteous principles and commandments that will be in place under the administration of Christ's future kingdom of blessing for the world of mankind. They will thus be denied any access to the tree of life, and to experience the joys that will be associated with the glorious ages to come when there shall be no more sin, violence or death.

John writes of these incorrigibles in connection with all evil and all evildoers who will be forever removed from the perfected earth and its people, saying, “There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”—Rev. 21:27

A PURE LANGUAGE OF TRUTH

When describing the blessings that will be made available to all of the willingly obedient under the righteous rule of Christ’s future kingdom of life and peace, the Prophet Isaiah wrote, “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.” (Isa. 11:9,10) Another of the Heavenly Father’s prophets said, “Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.”—Zeph 3:9

SORCERERS

Our featured scripture points to many immoralities, but our attention is especially drawn to the word ‘sorcerers’ and the impact they have on those who have been led astray by their godless activity and influence. This word has been translated from the Greek word ‘*farmakeia*’ which is found in the New Testament. *Farmakeia* is the root word from which the English word ‘pharmacy’ has been taken, and it pertains to the preparation of drugs and their use. The word sorcerers was

used by the translators in our featured text because of its close connection to enchantments and other ill effects that may be derived from the use of illegal drugs.

The uncontrolled use of drugs, their distribution and far-reaching association with sorcery and incantations thus have serious implications for the spread of violence and evil. This effect clearly identifies one of the great evils that marks our day, and the closing scenes of the present Gospel Age. The use of illicit drugs in our society has become a serious and growing threat, and has the danger to cause major havoc and distress among those who are affected by it.

PHARMACEUTICAL DRUGS

Pharmaceutical companies produce various medicines and other substances that they make available to the general public. They do this under a patent which then gives them exclusive rights to market their products in a lawful manner. Within a controlled environment medicinal drugs are used by doctors and other health professionals as a means to treat many types of illnesses, or symptoms, of disease. The dispensing of these medicines is usually regulated by the government. Some of these medicinal products may be obtained over the counter from pharmacies without any restrictions. Behind-the-counter drugs are also available without a doctor's prescription, but must be carefully dispensed by a licensed pharmacist. Prescription-type drugs are only available when a doctor or other medical professional has authorized them.

ILLICIT DRUGS

The use of uncontrolled drugs and its trafficking has become a powerful global black market that creates enormous profits for the traffickers. This activity consists in the cultivation, manufacture, distribution and sale of illegal drugs, and it controls an international market. The United States Department of International Narcotics Control Strategy warns that the world's illicit drug trade is destabilizing democratic governments, corroding efforts to protect the environment, and helping organized crime to flourish. The State Department has said recently that the legal, economic, and social institutions of countries around the world are being undermined by this trade and its relationship with crime, corruption, and violence.

United Nations reports estimate that the evils of this illicit drug trade produce more than \$400 billion in revenues every year worldwide. Drug-related violence in South American countries and Mexico is already escalating at unprecedented levels, and is expected to continue even further in the coming years. In its quest for power and control, drug cartels are likely to target top Mexican politicians and law enforcement agents. It is also possible that United States officials may be targeted, according to reports submitted by diplomats and intelligence experts on both sides of the United States and Mexican border.

DRUG CARTELS

This dire warning underscores the difficult choices facing Mexico's current President Felipe Calderon as he attempts to confront the drug

cartels, and while weighing implications of growing casualties and the present slowing down of the economy. The problem reflects the rising concern among United States officials and analysts about the deteriorating security situation along our southern border. They are deeply concerned about the rising corruption among Mexico's top crime fighters, and the vulnerability of the Mexican military toward possible corruption in battling drug-related gangs.

It is already being reported that the uncontrolled violence is crippling cities and whole regions in Mexico. Some of these areas are on the immediate border with Texas and other border states. Top United States officials and analysts describe Ciudad Juarez, which is directly across the border from El Paso, as one of these failed cities, in which powerful drug cartels have taken total control.

MEXICO'S GROWING CONCERN

Frustration among senior United States officials over Mexican corruption is acute, particularly since the arrest of drug czar Noe Ramirez. He is alleged to have been receiving \$500,000 a month from the Arturo Beltran Leyva drug gang in exchange for intelligence gathering. Some of this originated with officials at the United States Embassy. Also, several high-ranking officials and police officers in Mexico have been arrested as part of an anticorruption effort known as Operation Cleanup. Recently, an army officer in Calderon's presidential guard was arrested and accused of selling secrets concerning the movements of his government in connection with the drug cartels. A senior administration official,

speaking on condition of anonymity, described the issue of corruption as being very complicated and very dangerous.

DRASTIC MEASURES REQUIRED

Frustration increases as the United States attempts to expand its role under the Merida Initiative, which is a \$1.4 billion program. This project is aimed at providing Mexico with new technology, training, and military equipment. The effort is designed to assist the Calderon government in battling cartels, and to help the Mexican government gain control of several of its cities, which totals about ten percent of its territory. Assistance may trickle in more slowly, however, as a result of the economic crisis in the United States at the present time. The initiative under the incoming administration of President Barack Obama, may be adjusted to address the issue of United States demand for drugs.

Drug trafficking has the capacity to corrupt, and the violence inflicted by these cartels presents a real threat to public security across America. Americans must either partner themselves more affectively with Mexico and others in the region, or face a far less secure future. Of immediate concern to both Mexican and United States officials is an increasingly skeptical Mexican public, whose support is essential. Although Calderon's strategy has succeeded in disrupting the cartels to some extent, the Mexican people are alarmed that their country's security situation has continued to worsen. Even when a journalist is killed nothing is done about it, and more than half a dozen journalists were slain in 2008.

CIUDAD JUAREZ

The mayor of Ciudad Juarez and some other elected officials have moved to El Paso, Texas in recent months and they then commute to Juarez. They report that in the year just ended there had been hundreds of drug-related killings. Throughout Mexico there have been more than 5,700 criminals, soldiers, police, journalists, and innocent bystanders killed. This figure is more than double the estimated numbers of those who were slain in the previous year.

Philip Heymann, a Harvard law professor and expert on terrorism, has characterized the present and ongoing violence in Mexico as narco-terrorism. He uses this term because of the extreme level of threats and gruesome tactics that are now being used in an effort to silence and intimidate the people, including the beheading of some victims of terror. He is reported as saying that the situation in Mexico is very dangerous for everyone, including the United States. He further points out that the situation hasn't yet registered in the minds of most Americans, but it will when they become the targets.

A news item was published recently in the *Los Angeles Times* (December 20, 2008) that draws attention to the true dimensions and level of violence in Ciudad Juarez. It appeared under the title, "In Ciudad Juarez, Death Is Just Around The Corner." The article was submitted by Ken Ellingwood, a staff writer who was reporting a drive-by shooting in which two people had just been killed in their van. His report suggests the horrific dimensions of violence that has taken place in this border town where more than 1,350 men, women, and children

were killed during the year 2008, and still counting at the time of his writing. The drug trade and fear rule the streets.

AN EVERYDAY OCCURENCE

Ellingwood describes the scene which he had observed in his news report. We quote from the article in part. "Two victims rest at a 45-degree angle, embraced by seat belts that at this moment seem an odd precaution, given the manner of death. Gunmen had pulled alongside the forest-green Chevy Tahoe on a gritty downtown street, and, in broad daylight, pumped 52 shots into where the bodies now lean.

"Is that twelve today?" a young man standing nearby asks. 'Ten,' I answered, meaning that ten people have been slain in Ciudad Juarez so far on this chilly afternoon. It is barely 3:00 in the afternoon. Seven more people will die later, bringing the day's total to seventeen in the city of 1.3 million residents. The young man nods. Around us, amid cut-rate dentists offices and bars, the looky-loos keep their rapt silence as workers from the coroner's office wrestle the newest victims from their car. It is a time of extraordinary violence all over Mexico. Feuding drug-trafficking groups and the federal government's military crackdown against organized crime have left hundreds of people dead this year. Nowhere has the bloodletting been worse than in Ciudad Juarez, a sprawling border city.

THE JUAREZ CARTEL

"The city's main drug-smuggling group, known as the Juarez cartel, is battling with rival traffickers from the northwestern state of Sinaloa for a piece of the lucrative drug trade in to the United

States. The gangland-style violence has left almost no corner of Ciudad Juarez untouched. Drug-related slayings take place in houses, restaurants and bars, at playgrounds and children's parties, and in car-to-car ambushes. The dead, mostly little known foot soldiers but also innocents caught in the crossfire, make up a ceaseless procession of clients for harried coroner's workers and daily fodder for the so-called red pages of local newspapers. In a country that each month finds new ways to scare itself with violence, Ciudad Juarez has become emblematic of how nasty things can get.

"A three-day visit by a pair of (*Los Angeles Times*) journalists to the rough-and-tumble factory town, across the border from El Paso, Texas, reveals a fear-struck place where most residents assume—often correctly—that the police are crooked and the government's control of the streets appears tenuous at best. In the Ciudad Juarez of 2008, you don't have to wait long for the next casualty."

ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

In another *Los Angeles Times* news item (January 15, 2009), staff writer Denise Dresser, writing under the title "Nice Won't Do," submitted the following report from which we quote in part. "President-elect Barack Obama and Mexican President Felipe Calderon engaged in a time-honored tradition: at the outset of a new United States administration, the American president meets the Mexican head of state. Obama and Calderon got the chance to speak about the importance of United States-Mexico relations—the diplomatic equivalent of new neighbors meeting over a cup of tea.

“Now it’s time to move beyond etiquette and face hard facts. Mexico is becoming a lawless country. More people died here in drug-related violence last year than were killed in Iraq. The government has been infiltrated by the mafias and drug cartels that it has vowed to combat. Although many believe that Obama’s greatest foreign policy challenges lie in Afghanistan or Iran or the Middle East, they may in fact be found south of the border. Mexico may not be a failed state yet, but it desperately needs to wage a more effective war against organized crime, and it must have the right kind of American help and incentives to succeed.

A DYSFUNCTIONAL DEMOCRACY

“Over the last decade, the surge in drug trafficking and Calderon’s failed efforts to contain it have been symptomatic of what doesn’t work in Mexico’s dysfunctional democracy. In 2007, violence related to the drug trade resulted in more than 2,000 murders in Mexico, and in 2008, the toll was more than 5,000. Only a few months ago, top-level officials in the Public Security Ministry were arrested and charged with protecting members of Mexico’s main drug cartels. Calderon’s promises to clean up the house have not gone far enough. People denounce the war while preserving the type of society that makes it inevitable.

“The Mexican president, who is seeking a stronger strategic relationship with the United States, told Obama that the heightened level of violence was a result of government inefficiency in combating drug cartels. In that view, the rise of street executions is evidence of a firm hand, not an ineffectual

one. But Calderon's self-congratulatory stance masks a president who insists on closing his eyes in the face of deep-rooted problems and complex challenges. The current strategy—based largely on the increased militarization of Mexico—isn't doing enough to end government corruption. Drug traffickers finance politicians, and politicians protect drug traffickers. Judges take bribes, and unregulated financial institutions make it easy to launder money. A weak, ill-trained, underpaid police force is easily infiltrated. And most important, Mexico's economic structure thwarts growth and social mobility, forcing Mexicans to either cross the border for a better life or join the narco-culture.

"Instead of the polite, traditional Mexico-United States meet-and-greet, Obama and Calderon must meet to change the facts on the ground in both nations. They could call it the audacity of moving beyond tea and sympathy."

PROPHETIC FOREGLEAMS

In the prophetic words of Isaiah, we read about the wonderful change that will come to pass when all of the earth's willingly obedient will have been lifted up to an appreciation and love for their Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus' kingdom of blessing. "The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations."—Isa. 60:14,15

NO MORE VIOLENCE

Under the ruling power of the church of Christ, the prophet writes, “Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.” (vs. 18) When the righteous laws of the future kingdom have been established over all the earth, there will be no more evil or evil-doers. “The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.”—vss. 19,20

THE CITY OF GOD

John the Revelator provides further dimension and beauty to this wonderful scene that describes our Lord’s kingdom of Truth and blessing that will be made available to all the families of the earth. “I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.”—Rev. 21:22-24

The sun and moon were symbols used by the Prophet Isaiah to describe the righteous laws of Christ’s kingdom and the true light of the holy temple of God. “The gates of it shall not be shut at

all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.” (vss. 25,26) Sin, and the sentence of death that was pronounced upon our first parents because of disobedience so long ago, will be ended. “There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”—vs. 27

“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” (Rev. 22:11,12) All shall be judged by the great judge. “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”(vs. 14) “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”—vs. 17

A PREVIEW OF THE KINGDOM

More than a hundred years ago students of the Bible were blessed by the publication of a book entitled, *The Divine Plan of the Ages* in which an inspiring account of the perfected earth and its people is presented. This will occur when the blessings associated with Christ’s future kingdom have accomplished the lifting-up process of all the obedient of mankind from the present scenes of sin, sickness, and death, to that of everlasting life in the world to come.

We quote from pages 191,192, in which the author says, “Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act. There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay—not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth’s society be; and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when thus they realize the resurrection work complete.”

“Shut out from the city shall be the depraved, the sorcerers, the impure, the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices a lie!”—Rev. 22:15, *J. B. Phillips Translation* ■

“The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion.”—Joel 3:16,17