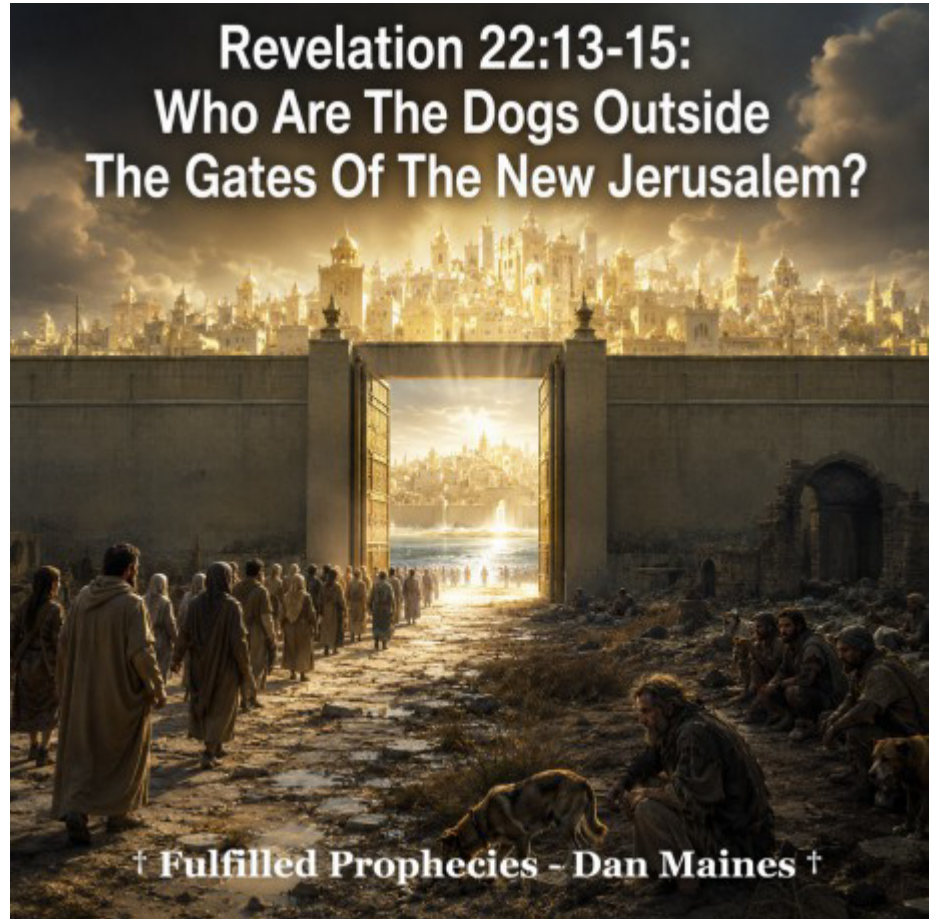


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## Revelation 22:13-15: Who Are The Dogs Outside The Gates Of The New Jerusalem?



By Dan Maines

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### Introduction

† Revelation 22:13-15 raises an important question. If the New Jerusalem represents the fulfilled New Covenant reality, who are the people described as being "without" the city in verse 15?

† The answer becomes clear when Scripture interprets Scripture. Revelation isn't describing people physically standing outside the walls of a gigantic city that descended from outer

space. It uses covenantal and spiritual imagery to contrast those who belong to Christ with those who remain outside of Him.

† Revelation 22 presents the New Jerusalem as an existing covenantal reality where the servants of God worship Him, see His face, have His name upon them, and receive the water of life. Those outside are outside the covenant blessings of the city.

† In its first-century judgment setting, this language had a direct application to those who rejected Christ and remained identified with the condemned order that was passing away. Yet the spiritual distinction remains true today, life is found in Christ, and those who reject Him remain outside the blessings found in Him (John 3:36; 1 John 5:11-12).

### **Revelation 22:13-15**

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they will have the right to the tree of life, and may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs, the sorcerers, the sexually immoral persons, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.

† Verse 15 says "Without are the dogs." The contrast is between those who enter the city and those who remain outside it. The language is covenantal and spiritual, not a geographical description of people standing outside literal walls.

† Notice that verse 14 speaks of entering the city and having access to the tree of life. Verse 15 immediately contrasts those people with those who are "without." The issue is access to covenant life in Christ.

† Jesus is the beginning and the end. Therefore, the New Jerusalem can't be understood apart from Him. Those who belong to Christ participate in its life, while those who reject Him remain outside its covenant blessings (Galatians 3:26-29; Hebrews 12:22-24).

† This also shows why Revelation 22 doesn't describe the annihilation of planet Earth. There are still people described

outside the city while the nations receive the invitation to the water of life (Revelation 22:17).

### **Revelation 21:2-3**

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among the people, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,

† John identifies the New Jerusalem with bridal imagery. The city is "made ready as a bride adorned for her husband." This isn't primarily about buildings, streets, walls, or physical geography. It's about God's covenant people and God's dwelling with them.

† The New Jerusalem comes down from heaven because its origin is God. The emphasis isn't humanity traveling to a physical city somewhere in the universe, but God's dwelling being established with His redeemed people.

† This agrees with the rest of the New Testament, where believers are described as God's household, God's temple, and God's dwelling place (Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:5).

### **Hebrews 12:22-24**

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

† Hebrews doesn't say believers will someday come to the heavenly Jerusalem. It says they had already come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. The writer was describing a covenantal reality they were already entering through Christ.

† This is one of the clearest passages for understanding

Revelation 21 and 22. Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the assembly, Jesus, and the New Covenant are connected together.

† Therefore, being inside the New Jerusalem means belonging to the covenantal city through Christ. Being outside means being outside that covenant relationship and its blessings (Hebrews 13:12-14).

### **Galatians 4:25-26**

Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is enslaved with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother.

† Paul establishes two Jerusalems. One was the earthly Jerusalem associated with bondage, and the other was "the Jerusalem that is above."

† This distinction is essential. Revelation's New Jerusalem is the Jerusalem from above, not a rebuilt earthly Jerusalem and not a future political capital in the Middle East.

† Those who rejected Christ and clung to the old covenantal order remained identified with the Jerusalem that was in bondage. Those who belonged to Christ belonged to the Jerusalem above (Galatians 4:21-31).

### **John 3:18**

The one who believes in Him is not judged; the one who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

† Jesus established the fundamental distinction. Those who believe in Him aren't condemned, while those who reject Him remain under judgment.

† This helps explain what being outside the city means spiritually. The issue isn't physical distance from a city gate. The issue is a person's relationship to Christ.

† A person can physically live anywhere on Earth and still participate in the spiritual blessings of the New Jerusalem through Christ. Likewise, a person can reject Christ and remain

outside those blessings (John 5:24; John 10:9).

### **John 10:9**

I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

† Jesus said that He is the door. Entrance into God's saving presence has always centered upon Christ, not physical geography.

† This makes Revelation's language about entering through the gates understandable. The gates represent access to the blessings of God's covenant city, and that access exists only through Christ.

† No one enters the New Jerusalem through nationality, ancestry, law keeping, earthly Jerusalem, or religious tradition. Entrance is through Jesus Christ (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

### **Revelation 21:24-27**

The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

† This passage provides one of the strongest explanations of Revelation 22:15. The gates remain open while the nations walk by the city's light.

† If this described the condition after the physical universe had ended and every human destiny had been removed from earthly history, permanently open gates and nations walking by the city's light would be difficult to explain.

† The picture instead shows the continuing glory and influence of God's fulfilled covenant kingdom. The city is holy, its gates are open, and nothing unclean becomes part of the city.

† Revelation 22:15 therefore doesn't mean sinful people are physically gathered immediately outside literal gates. It identifies people who remain spiritually outside the holy

covenant community and its blessings.

## **Revelation 22:17**

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires, take the water of life without cost.

† This invitation is extremely important for understanding verse 15. Revelation has just described people outside the city, and then the invitation is given, "Come."

† The bride still says, "Come." The thirsty are still invited to take the water of life freely. This makes sense in the fulfilled kingdom, where the New Jerusalem is present and the gospel invitation continues to go to the nations.

† Those outside aren't being told that they can physically walk through architectural gates. They're being invited to come to Christ and receive life (John 4:13-14; John 7:37-38).

† The city remains holy, but its invitation remains open. Those outside can hear the gospel, believe in Christ, and become citizens of God's kingdom (Colossians 1:13; Philippians 3:20).

## **Who Are The Dogs In Revelation 22:15?**

† The word "dogs" shouldn't automatically be interpreted as literal animals or as a mysterious group existing after the end of human history. Scripture uses "dogs" figuratively for people characterized by uncleanness, opposition, and rejection of God's truth (Philippians 3:2; Psalm 22:16).

† Revelation 22:15 groups the dogs with sorcerers, sexually immoral people, murderers, idolaters, and those who love and practice falsehood. These descriptions identify people by their sinful character and their exclusion from the holiness of God's covenant city.

† In Revelation's original first-century setting, this had particular force against the enemies of Christ and His people. They rejected the Messiah, persecuted His followers, and stood outside the covenant blessings that were found in Christ (Matthew 23:34-36; John 8:42-44).

† After the judgment of the old covenantal world, the principle

remains. The New Jerusalem is God's fulfilled covenant dwelling, and those who reject Christ remain spiritually outside its saving blessings.

## **Were Those Outside The Gates Those Who Rejected Christ?**

† Yes, in Revelation's first-century context, those who rejected Christ and remained opposed to Him were outside the covenant city. They didn't share in the life, righteousness, citizenship, and fellowship found in Christ (John 3:18; John 3:36).

† This doesn't mean every individual described outside the city was physically standing outside Jerusalem after AD 70.

"Outside" describes covenantal exclusion, not geographical location.

† The distinction continues today. The New Jerusalem represents God's people dwelling with Him in the fulfilled New Covenant. Those who belong to Christ are citizens of that heavenly city, while those who reject Christ remain outside its covenant blessings (Hebrews 12:22-24; Galatians 4:26).

† This is why the invitation remains, "Come." The gates aren't closed. The water of life is still freely offered. The nations can still walk in the light of the city, and the gospel continues to call people into life in Christ (Revelation 21:24-25; Revelation 22:17).

## **Historical References**

† Josephus described the terrible condition of first-century Jerusalem during the Jewish-Roman War, including violence, murder, famine, deception, and internal corruption before the city's destruction. His history provides important background for the judgment setting surrounding the end of the old covenantal age. (Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Books 5-7)

† Tacitus recorded the Roman siege and the desperate circumstances surrounding Jerusalem during the war. His account independently confirms the historical setting of catastrophic first-century judgment. (Tacitus, Histories, Book 5)

† Eusebius later connected Jesus' warnings with the destruction

that came upon Jerusalem and recorded the tradition that believers left the city before the war overtook it. (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapters 5-7)

## **How It Applies To Us Today**

† Revelation 22:15 doesn't teach that we're waiting for a future physical New Jerusalem to descend onto a destroyed planet. God's people have come to the heavenly Jerusalem through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:22-24).

† We don't need to search for the New Jerusalem on a map. Our citizenship is found in Christ and His kingdom (Philippians 3:20; Colossians 1:13).

† The distinction between inside and outside remains spiritually meaningful. Life is in Christ. Those who have the Son have life, while those who don't have the Son don't have that life (1 John 5:11-12).

† Our responsibility isn't to frighten people with predictions of a future destruction of planet Earth. It's to proclaim the water of life freely and invite people to Christ (Revelation 22:17).

† The gates are open. The invitation continues. The bride still says, "Come." God's kingdom isn't waiting to begin. We live in the reality of the fulfilled New Covenant and proclaim Christ to the world.

## **Q & A Appendix**

**Q:** Is Revelation 22:15 describing people physically standing outside the gates of the New Jerusalem?

**A:** No. The language is covenantal and spiritual. Revelation contrasts those who participate in the life of God's holy city with those who remain outside its blessings (Revelation 21:24-27; Revelation 22:14-17).

**Q:** Were those outside the city people who rejected Christ?

**A:** Yes. In the first-century context, those who rejected Christ and remained opposed to Him stood outside the blessings of the New Covenant. Jesus had already said that the one who

didn't believe was judged already (John 3:18).

**Q:** Does "outside" mean they were physically outside Jerusalem?

**A:** No. Physical location isn't the issue. Hebrews says believers had come to the heavenly Jerusalem, showing that this is covenantal and spiritual language (Hebrews 12:22-24).

**Q:** Are there still people spiritually outside the New Jerusalem today?

**A:** Yes. The fulfilled New Jerusalem is the covenantal dwelling of God with His people, but people who don't belong to Christ remain outside its saving blessings. This is why the invitation still goes out, "Come," and the water of life is still offered freely (Revelation 22:17; 1 John 5:11-12).

**Q:** Can someone who is outside come in?

**A:** Yes. That's exactly why Revelation ends with an invitation. The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." Whoever is thirsty may come and take the water of life freely (Revelation 22:17).

**Q:** Does Revelation 22:15 prove that sinful people continue to exist after the New Jerusalem is established?

**A:** It shows that the presence of the New Jerusalem doesn't require the end of human life on planet Earth. Revelation describes nations walking by the city's light, open gates, people outside, and an invitation to come and drink the water of life (Revelation 21:24-27; Revelation 22:15-17).

**Q:** Why are the gates of the New Jerusalem never shut?

**A:** Because access to God's covenant blessings through Christ remains open. The nations are invited into the light and life found in Him (Revelation 21:24-25; John 10:9).

**Q:** Is Revelation 22:15 describing eternal conscious torment?

**A:** The verse itself doesn't describe people being tortured. It describes them as "without," meaning outside the holy city and

its covenant blessings. We shouldn't force something into the verse that the verse doesn't say (Revelation 22:14-15).

**Q:** What is the main message of Revelation 22:13-15 for us?

**A:** Jesus is the Alpha and Omega. Life, cleansing, and entrance into God's covenant city are found in Him. Those apart from Christ remain outside those blessings, but the gospel invitation remains open, "Come" (Revelation 22:13-17).

## **† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †**

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### **Source Index**

† Revelation 22:13-15; Revelation 21:2-3; Hebrews 12:22-24; Galatians 4:25-26; John 3:18; John 10:9; Revelation 21:24-27; Revelation 22:17

† Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Books 5-7; Tacitus, Histories, Book 5; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapters 5-7

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