

## THE "SPRINGS OF WATER" IN REVELATION 14:7

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"Fear God and give glory to Him, because the hour of judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water" (Rev 14:7). The Bible presents God as the one who is in charge and in full control of all creation including the waters. In the book of Revelation the "sea," "water," and "springs of water" are highly concentrated theological concepts referring to fundamental ideas such as creation and judgment.

*Key Words: Water, Fountains, Judgment, Creation, Flood, Eschatology*

### 1. Introduction

In Rev 14:7, John alludes to the fourth commandment of the Decalogue through a series of direct verbal, thematic, and structural parallels: "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy" (Exod 20:11).<sup>1</sup> However, John chooses to add to this list of created items the "springs of water." Is there any theological significance in this addition? Does it change or alter the meaning of the alluded text? How does this addition fit into the context of Rev 14, and what message does this addition convey? In order to answer these questions, it is helpful to discuss selected Old Testament and New Testament passages related to the "springs of water" or "fountains of water."

<sup>1</sup> Jon Paulien, "Revisiting the Sabbath in the Book of Revelation," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 9/1-2 (1998): 179-186.

## 2. Biblical Usage and Semantic Categories of the "Springs of Water"

While there are numerous water-related expressions in the Bible, the phrase "springs of water" or "fountains of water" carries a special significance. John's emphasis on God as the Creator and Sustainer of heaven, earth, and water is manifested in his use of the water-related concepts as acts of God.

### 2.1 Previous Studies

Perhaps the only article that deals directly with the subject of this study is the one written by John T. Baldwin.<sup>2</sup> In the section about the meaning of the phrase "fountains of waters" Baldwin proposes that the significance of this phrase is related to divine judgment. After examining the semantic correspondence between the Greek word for "springs" or "fountain" used in Revelation and the Hebrew term used in Genesis, Baldwin suggests:

This usage of the term "fountains" in the original biblical languages permits the reader to grasp a possible connection between "fountains of waters" (Revelation 14:7c) and the "fountains of the deep" (Gen 7:11), and hence to the time when the "fountains of the deep" were broken up at the time of God's divine aquatic judgment against human sin. Thus, the reference to "fountains of waters" in Revelation 14:7c may be a divinely intended suggestion to another time and form of divine judgment, namely, to God's flood which was a divine judgment in response to human iniquity.<sup>3</sup>

Another notable study on Rev 14:7 is done by Jon Paulien, who finds a direct verbal parallel between the words of v. 7c, "made the heavens, and the earth, and the sea," and the words of Exod 20:11, "made the heavens

<sup>2</sup> John T. Baldwin, ed., "Revelation 14:7: An Angel's Worldview," in *Creation, Catastrophe and Calvary* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 19–39. In his article, Baldwin turns the reader's attention to the fact that Rev 14:7 unexpectedly uses the phrase "the fountains of water" instead of the expected "the sea" of Exodus. This reference, says Baldwin, "could well signal something of importance." Baldwin proposes that the context of judgement, in which this text appears, explains the divine intentionality of putting "the fountains of water" into the structure of this chapter. He connects the divine judgment at the time of the flood with the coming judgment.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

and the earth, the sea."<sup>4</sup> The present study relies on Paulien's exegetical conclusion

The concept of water, as used by John in the New Testament, is studied by Judith Alice Kowalski in her dissertation entitled "Of Water and Spirit: Narrative Structure and Theological Development in the Gospel of John."<sup>5</sup> However, Kowalski deals only with the Gospel of John. Wai-Yee Ng, in her doctoral dissertation, studied the water symbolism and its eschatological significance. While she focused on John 4, she also studied the water related passages in the book of Revelation classifying them into passages related to calamities, to God's promise of salvation, and to consummation.<sup>6</sup> Gerhard Hasel devoted one of his scholarly articles to the phrase "all the fountains of the great deep." He analysed the role of the fountains in the mechanism of the flood and showed the universal character of this event.<sup>7</sup>

## 2.2 Water-Related Biblical Concepts

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament often use the terms for a spring or a fountain of water in various figurative senses: "A righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring" (Prov 25:26). "Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew" (Deut 33:28). "The fountain of water" could also

4 Paulien, "Revisiting the Sabbath in the Book of Revelation."

5 Judith Alice Kowalski, "Of Water and Spirit: Narrative Structure and Theological Development in the Gospel of John" (Th.D. diss.; Marquette University, 1987), 55. This dissertation analyses the structure of John's Gospel by noting a variety of linguistic characteristics, temporal indicators and narrative modes within the received text. Kowalski observes that the dynamics of the water motif evolve and change throughout the gospel narrative. They do not offer a single paradigm for salvation. One unifying element among the episodes that mention water is that functions regularly ascribed to water such as birth, purification, baptism, drinking, and healing are ascribed to the action of the Word. According to Kowalski the water seems to communicate the comparison between physical timing and spiritual timing.

6 Wai-Yee Ng, "Johannine Water Symbolism and Its Eschatological Significance: With Special Reference to John 4" (Ph.D. diss.; Westminster Theological Seminary, 1997), 17.

7 Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Fountains of the Great Deep," *Origins* 1 (1974): 67-72; See also his other related articles: "The Biblical View of the Extent of the Flood" and "Some Issues Regarding the Nature and Universality of the Genesis Flood Narrative," *Origins* 5 (1978): 83-98.

signify a catastrophic event and God's wrath.<sup>8</sup> Whylan Owens notes that "to the Biblical writer, water both pleased and frightened at the same time."<sup>9</sup>

### 2.3 Semantic Correspondence

There are several words that the Old Testament uses for "fountain" and "spring." The most common words are: מַיִן (1 Sam 29:1), מִקְדָּר (Prov 5:18), and מַבְיַעַע (Eccl 12:6). The term מִקְדָּר is used in a variety of ways: It is used for a woman's menstrual discharge (Lev 20:18); for a source of life (Pss 36:9; 68:26), as an allusion to a sexual intercourse (Prov 5:18), and in a figurative speech (Jer 9:1). Usually, the OT's usages of "water," in general and of "springs of water," in particular, have literal meanings.<sup>10</sup>

The Septuagint uses the Greek word πηγῆ, "spring," in Gen 7:11, Prov 5:18 and Rev 14:7. It is possible that the author of Revelation uses the word πηγῆ to indicate the dependence of Rev 14:7 on Gen 7:11. Jon Paulien notes:

Indeed, it would seem that John's exile on Patmos makes most likely the possibility that he was working from memory in alluding to the Old Testament. This could account for the tremendous breadth in his allusions to the Old Testament, including his use of various traditions that might have been available to him in the course of his ministry, while allowing, as well, for verbal and even conceptual changes.<sup>11</sup>

John allows conceptual changes in referring to Exod 20. However, he is not departing from the interpretative techniques used in Judaism.<sup>12</sup> As it is reflected in the Midrash, the post-exilic rabbis recognized that Scripture has many meanings and applications. Jesus seemed to use the same approach as He commented on the bread that the people ate in the

<sup>8</sup> Gen 7:11; 8:2.

<sup>9</sup> Whylan B. Owens, "The Theological Significance of 'MAYIM' in the Old Testament" (PhD diss.; New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1992), 70.

<sup>10</sup> "And they came to Elim, where were twelve springs of water, and three score and ten palm-trees: and they encamped there by the waters" (Exod 15:27). "And they journeyed from Marah, and came unto Elim: and in Elim were twelve *springs of water*, and three score and ten palm trees; and they encamped there" (Num 33:9).

<sup>11</sup> Jon Paulien, *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets: Allusions and the Interpretation of Rev 8:7-12* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1988), 299.

<sup>12</sup> Craig A. Evans, "The Old Testament in the New," in *The Face of New Testament Studies* (ed. Scot McKnight and Grant Osborne; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 130.

wilderness (John 6:25-59; Exod 16). John the apostle applied a similar method in his writings. While there are no formal Old Testament quotations in the book of Revelation, according to *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* there are no fewer than 620 Old Testament allusions.<sup>13</sup>

John's use of "fountains of water" does not deprive his allusion to Exod 20 of its original meaning. Yet, John places a new emphasis upon the Decalogue text. In order to perceive this emphasis, one should refer to the most common Old Testament usage of the expression "fountains of water."

### 3. Significance of the "Fountains of Water" in the Bible

The Old Testament refers to "fountains of water" in different ways: (1) with the plain meaning of sources of water; (2) with a positive, beneficial connotation; and (3) with the meaning of judgment. The following section will explore the latter connotations of benefit and judgment.

#### 3.1 "Fountains of Water" as Benefit

McKenzie observes that "water is often in the Bible identified with life; in the new Israel the new life comes from the temple where Yahweh dwells among his people."<sup>14</sup> The acts of God that could be considered as beneficial were those in which God intervened in the history of the world in a beneficial way for humankind. Such beneficial acts include creation of water and causing water to flow from the rock in the wilderness.<sup>15</sup> Holladay notes that the "fountain of life" is a standard phrase in Psalms and Proverbs to convey the idea of the "source of life," as a reference to one of the attributes or names of Yahweh.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, Biblestudytools.com, s.v. "Old Testament in the New Testament," <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/the-old-testament-in-the-new-testament.html> (2 April 2012).

<sup>14</sup> John L. McKenzie, *A Theology of the Old Testament* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 291.

<sup>15</sup> Gen 1:2, 6, 7, 9-10, 20-22; Exod 8:2; Isa 48:21.

<sup>16</sup> William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah* (Hermeneia; ed. Paul D. Hanson, Frank Moore Cross, Jr.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986-1989), 1:92.

### 3.1.1 "Fountains of Water" and Creation Act

God's regulation of the waters begins with the creation event. From the outset of the creation narrative, water served as the fount of creation, the foundation of the world. Dry land appeared only on the third day of creation. The waters under the firmament were gathered into one common bed as the lands under them sank. In other parts, the lands rose and a great continent or continents appeared (Gen 1:9, 10). "When there were no depths, I was brought forth, when there were no fountains abounding with water" (Prov 8:24). "When he established the clouds above, When He strengthened the fountains of the deep" (Prov 8:28). "The essence of the teaching about water found in the biblical creation narrative was the power of God over the waters. God had ultimate control over not only the placement of the waters, but over their maintenance as well."<sup>17</sup>

### 3.1.2 Gushing Water from the Rock

In Isa 48:21, the prophet reflects on the event in the wilderness: "And they did not thirst when He led them through the deserts; He caused the waters to flow from the rock for them; He also split the rock, and the waters gushed out." John Watts describes it as "an ecstatic hymn which rejoices in the miracle of grace."<sup>18</sup>

Westermann suggested that by referring to the miracle in the desert, Isaiah alludes to the future miraculous deliverance of the people from exile.<sup>19</sup> God's miracle in the desert had become nearly proverbial or metaphorical of his saving power.<sup>20</sup> God had demonstrated his power to bless his people under every circumstance. Durham observed, "The whole point of and reason for this narrative is Yahweh's miraculous provision for his people, by supplying water where there was none from the unlikeliest of all spots, a rock."<sup>21</sup> Thus, the spring of water was associated with God's deliverance and his miraculous blessings. Delitzsch called the water in Isa 12:3 "water of salvation." Just as God had miraculously provided water for the Israelites in the wilderness, so He

<sup>17</sup> Owens, 22.

<sup>18</sup> John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah* (WBC 2; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 179.

<sup>19</sup> Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary* (OTL; eds. G. Ernest Wright et al; trans. David M. G. Stalker; Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1969), 205.

<sup>20</sup> James Muilenburg, "The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66: Introduction and Exegesis," in *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), 5:563.

<sup>21</sup> John I. Durham, *Exodus* (WBC 3; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 231.



had become the source of salvation "from which ye may draw with and according to your heart's delight."<sup>22</sup> Young observed:

From the rock in Sinai water gushed forth; from the springs of salvation also men will draw waters. Waters! It is an intensive plural, for it indicates the fullness and all-sufficiency of the blessings which come from these springs. Water is a beautiful figure of salvation and its attendant blessings. How refreshing and reviving to a wanderer in a thirsty and dry land. How fit an emblem for salvation!<sup>23</sup>

God describes himself as the "fountain of living water" in the prophecy of Jer 2:13. God's blessed intervention in water-related matters is emphasized in Ps 78:14, 16.

The expressions "fountains" and "springs of water" are used in positive ways in the apocalyptic vision of the restored created order. In this respect, Isa 41:18 declares: "I will open rivers in desolate heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."<sup>24</sup> J. R. Price observed: "In eschatological visions a fountain is given as a sign of the Lord's favor, while dry fountains are described as a sign of His disapproval."<sup>25</sup> A source of true cleansing will become available in the final days.<sup>26</sup>

### 3.2 The Flood as God's Judgment

One of the most significant ways in which God executed His judgment was by the flood as a radical response to the sinful, destructive actions of mankind on Earth. By no means was God's judgment arbitrary. It was a legitimate reaction to the transgression of known boundaries.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1949), 1:293.

<sup>23</sup> Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (NICOT 1; ed. Edward J. Young; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965–1972), 404–405.

<sup>24</sup> See also Joel 3:18.

<sup>25</sup> J. R. Price, "Fountain," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 2:356.

<sup>26</sup> Zech 13:1. Although it is not explicitly clear as to which Old Testament passage Jesus referred to in John 7: 37–39, it is certain that He used the metaphor of running water as a positive image.

<sup>27</sup> Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1961, 1967), 1:259–260, as quoted by Owens, 29.

### 3.2.1. God's Ultimate Control of the Waters

God's judgements reveal His complete power and control over the created order. He can turn a fruitful land into barrenness.<sup>28</sup> He gives drink to the thirsty and makes fat the bones of those caught in a drought.<sup>29</sup> He causes rivers to run clean and smooth.<sup>30</sup> The wrath of God was just as sure and destruction came swiftly, reducing the mighty nation of Babylon to lowly pools of water.<sup>31</sup> God demonstrated his power over water in its ultimate sense with the destruction of the world. As the Creator and the Owner of the world He had the right to exercise His power. J. R. Price noticed that the flood "served as the original undoing of creation."<sup>32</sup>

Although God is sovereign, He is not capricious in exercising His will. The act of bringing about the flood was an act of judgment upon the world, which had become exceedingly wicked.<sup>33</sup> The Scriptures assert that the purpose of the flood was to wipe out a sinful and degenerate humanity; and this purpose could not have been accomplished by destroying only a portion of the race. Nahum M. Sarna observed: "The Bible leaves no doubt as to God's motives. The choice of Noah is inspired solely by his righteousness; caprice nor partiality play no role in divine resolution."<sup>34</sup>

### 3.2.2 The Theological Significance of the Flood

By exercising control over water God demonstrates His relationship to mankind. Divine mastery over water is demonstrated in the flood event (Gen 7), the Red Sea deliverance (Ex 15:1-18), the crossing of the Jordan River (Josh 3:16; 4:18), and in Elijah's crossing of the Jordan (2 King 2:8).

Jesus made special reference to Noah and the flood: "And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: they ate, they drank,

<sup>28</sup> Ps 107:33-35; Isa 43:20.

<sup>29</sup> Isa 58:11; cf. 44:3.

<sup>30</sup> Ezek 32:14.

<sup>31</sup> Isa 14:23.

<sup>32</sup> Price, "Fountain," 356.

<sup>33</sup> Gen 6:5-7, 11-13; 7:1; Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC 1; ed. D. J. Wiseman; Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1962), 86.

<sup>34</sup> Nahum M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis: The World of the Bible in the Light of History* (New York: Schocken, 1970), 51.



they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but in the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke 17:26-30; cf. Matt 24:39).

It is important to observe the context into which Jesus places the flood destruction, namely alongside the destruction of Sodom and the destruction of the ungodly at the time of Christ's Second Coming. In Jewish apocalyptic writings the flood was interpreted as a "typos of God's visitation at the end of time."<sup>35</sup> Thus, from an eschatological perspective, the expression "fountains of water" has an articulated judgmental meaning.

#### 4. "Fountains of Water" as Blessing and Curse

The biblical writers used water related expressions as metaphors of various theological concepts. "The range of the metaphorical use of water in the scriptures was virtually endless. Water stood for life and death, prosperity and desolation, and power and weakness."<sup>36</sup>

##### 4.1 Double Implication of the "Fountains of Water"

One of the remarkable Old Testament hymns of creation refers to the fountains abounding with water (Prov 8:24, 28). Summarizing the account of creation (vss. 32-33), the author, speaking on behalf of wisdom, concludes in vss. 35-36: "For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favour from the Lord. But he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; All those who hate me love death." Here we find a double implication of divine judgment, a judgment based on the authority and wisdom of the Creator. Owens observes: "God entered his creation through both the beneficent control of nature on behalf of mankind and the destruction by nature through which he chastened his people."<sup>37</sup>

It is remarkable that the term "fountains of the deep" conveys both the idea of blessing and destruction. Kowalsky writes about some peculiarities of water related expressions employed by John:

The reader becomes increasingly aware that the many diverse occasions where water appears in this gospel seem to be positively

<sup>35</sup> Lars Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted* (transl. Neil Tomkinson; Coniectanea Biblica; New Testament Series, No. 1; Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1966), 32. As quoted by Jon Paulien, *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets*, 230.

<sup>36</sup> Owens, 163.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

connected with Jesus (primarily), with the disciples (secondarily), and with receptive, interested characters and believers (occasionally); but water is connected with the Jews and sceptical others only neutrally or negatively.<sup>38</sup>

This is, especially true with those occasions where water appears in the form of fountains, since they are used both for benefit and destruction. "Fountains of water" produce entirely different effects on different people. At the time of the flood, the "fountains of water" did not harm Noah and his family; on the other hand, all the evil doers were destroyed. The righteous should not be afraid of the "springs of water," but should expect blessings, as the Scriptures seem to indicate.<sup>39</sup> At the same time the unrighteous should be terrified by the "fountains of water."

Richard M. Davidson refers to the flood as the saving/judging act of God.<sup>40</sup> Jesus declared in Matt 24:37-39 that the last events on this earth will be similar to those which took place in the days of Noah. "For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark" (v. 38). "On that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up" (Gen 7:11).

#### 4.2 Judgment as Undoing of Creation

Revelation 14:7, contains the call to worship God and give glory to Him as the God of creation in the context of God's judgment.<sup>41</sup> John presents God as the one "who made the heavens and earth, the sea," which is the message of Exod 20:11, and then adds, "and springs of water."

In her commentary on Revelation, J. Massyngberde Ford writes:

The reference to God as creator is understandable in the light of the reference to heaven, earth, and the water under the earth in Exod 20:4. Further the reference to the hour of judgment (vs. 7) bears affinity to Exod 20:5, God's declaration of jealousy and vengeance on those who hate Him.<sup>42</sup>

God exercises His judgment because He, as Creator, has the right and the responsibility to do it. Brown indicated that, "God's sovereignty over

<sup>38</sup> Kowalski, 55.

<sup>39</sup> Josh 15:19; Judg 1:15; Isa 35:7; 41:18; 49:10.

<sup>40</sup> Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical "B" Structures* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981), 326-327.

<sup>41</sup> In the context of worshiping and obeying the God of creation, the parallel between this text and Exod 20:11 seems absolutely relevant.

<sup>42</sup> J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation* (AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 248.

creation is translated in terms of power *over* and *against* creation."<sup>43</sup> It is possible that by adding the phrase "fountains of water" John integrates the idea of judgment with the very act of creation.

In fact, the concept of judgment is often presented in the Bible as contrasting creation, as an undoing of the created order. John demonstrates loyalty to this approach by integrating the term "springs of water" with the message of the coming judgment. As the Creator of the earth, God reserves to Himself the right to judge the earth. Moreover, John indicates that the instrument of this judgment is implanted in the very act of creation. It is "the springs of water" that will be later employed to destroy the wicked. Richard M. Davidson observed that, "the Noachic flood is nothing less than the cosmic undoing or reversal of creation."<sup>44</sup> In a similar way Nahum Sarna stated, "the Flood is a cosmic catastrophe that is actually the undoing of creation."<sup>45</sup>

The events brought about by the flood are presented in an order opposite to the order of creation:

Creation:

1. Creation ends with the emerging of human beings (Gen 1:26).
2. Before the creation of man, animals were brought to being (v. 24).
3. Earlier, "the waters brought forth . . . the moving creatures" (v. 20).
4. The gathering of the water under the sky (v. 9) preceded the creation of the life.
5. Separation between "water under the expanse from the water above it" (v. 6).
6. The very first creative act of God on the earth presented as the Spirit (or simply wind) "hovering over the waters" (v. 2).

Flood:

1. The Flood starts with Noah and his relatives entering the ark (Gen 7:13).
2. The next verse of the flood story tells us about the animals gathered into the ark (v. 14).
3. The rising water takes away the lives of all creatures (v. 21).

<sup>43</sup> Brown, 236.

<sup>44</sup> Richard M. Davidson, "Biblical Evidence for the Universality of the Genesis Flood," in *Creation, Catastrophe and Calvary* (ed. J. T. Baldwin; Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 121.

<sup>45</sup> Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis* (The JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia/New York/Yerusalem: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 48.

4. The life is destroyed by water rushing on the earth from above and from below (v. 23).
5. Separation of the two waters is canceled by the act of flood.
6. The beginning of the flood's end was characterized by the "wind over the earth" (8:1) that "receded waters."

The closing of the "springs of the deep" (8:2) marks the end of the flood. The judgment of God in the form of an undoing of creation was accomplished. This judgment is understood as a righteous act because God used His rights over His creation and destroyed the wicked.

It should be noted that God's judgments have two important aspects: vindication of the righteous and condemnation and destruction of the wrongdoers. John Skinner calls the flood "a partial undoing of the work of creation."<sup>46</sup> Partial, because it only affected the wicked ones and vindicated the righteous. While referring to the flood as "the original, cosmic undoing of creation,"<sup>47</sup> Tikva Frymer-Kensky compares it to the judgment described by the prophet Jeremiah (4:27) and notices that the prophet states that "the destruction will not be final."<sup>48</sup> Frymer-Kensky sees the flood not only as an act of punishment, but first of all, as a purifying activity of God by means of His judgment.<sup>49</sup>

### 4.3 Eschatological Perspective

Water related concepts in the Bible express the idea of a two-fold eschatological judgment. For example, while Hosea compares God's wrath to rushing waves of water,<sup>50</sup> Ecclesiastes refers to water as a demonstration of God's manifested grace.<sup>51</sup> Mays asserts that when God

<sup>46</sup> John Skinner, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis," in *The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments* (2nd ed.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1930, 1956), 164.

<sup>47</sup> Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "Pollution, Purification, and Purgation in Biblical Israel," in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday* (ed. Carol L. Meyers and M. O'Connor; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 410.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* Whether the passage of Jer 4: 27 refers to an apocalyptic vision, or as Tikva Frymer-Kensky suggests, to the "imminent destruction of Israel," it is clear that its message concerns not just destruction, but also introduces hope for the remnant.

<sup>49</sup> In another parallel between the flood and the exodus, Frymer-Kensky declares: "Just as mankind was saved from permanent destruction by Noah's survival, so too God will not exterminate the people, but will rescue a remnant to begin again."

<sup>50</sup> Hos 5:10. The full force of God's wrath would be "poured out" upon the captains of Judah (cf. Zeph 1:14-18).

<sup>51</sup> Eccl 2:6.

took water from the heavenly reservoir and poured it down as a blessing of rain upon the earth, he demonstrated his power and majesty.<sup>52</sup> Stuart disagrees, holding that "more likely the point is that Yahweh can cause storms, tides, floods, etc."<sup>53</sup> Both may be correct because Yahweh could produce a double effect by the same act. With regard to Rev 14:7 Wai-Yee Ng classifies this text as a calamity passage, but also states that it deals with the promise of salvation:

The created world described in the creation accounts of Genesis is here depicted in the Apocalypse as the catastrophic universe. The message of this is: "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water" (14:7). Thus, for those who worship God, i.e., those "who have come out of the great tribulation," there are promises of salvation issued from the throne, i.e., from the heavenly worship scene described in Rev 4-5.<sup>54</sup>

John chose to link the idea of the final judgment with the "fountains of water," a concept that carries not only the idea of destruction, but also a rich theological and historical background for prosperity, reward, and blessings. While the judgment will bring destruction upon the wicked it will bring reward and blessings to the righteous. This does not mean that at the final judgment God will use the same mechanism as He did at the time of the flood, for God promised that the flood will be no more. In Rev 14 John is only given a promise of the judgment and the two-fold effect of this judgment.

## 5. Conclusions

In the account of the flood the expression "fountains of water" carries the meaning of a destructive power directed by God. However, it is also true that the same "fountains of water" symbolise the abundant springs of blessings for the faithful. Those who have responded to God as the sole Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer of all that exists have no reason to fear God's judgment. There is a special emphasis in Rev 14:7 on keeping the Sabbath commandment, for God chose to use the words of the Sabbath commandment to communicate the message of the final judgment. Both the Sabbath commandment and the first angel's message rely on the fact

<sup>52</sup> James Luther Mays, *Amos: A Commentary* (OTL; ed. G. Ernest Wright, John Bright, James Barr, and Peter Ackroyd; Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1969), 155.

<sup>53</sup> Douglas Stuart, *Hosea, Jonah* (WBC 31; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 393.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 255.

of creation. The inclusion of the term “fountains of water” into the context of creation seems to be very appropriate.

As shown in this study, the expression the “fountains of water” brings together the idea of creation and judgment. As Exod 20:11 speaks of the completion of the creation week, John organizes the message of Rev 14:7 in agreement with this event. Just as there was a creative activity of God at the beginning, there will be an act of divine intervention in the event of the final judgment.