

John's use of Scripture in Revelation 1:71

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Abstract

John's use of Scripture in Revelation 1:7

Four questions are asked in this paper: (1) Which are the Old Testament passages from which John quotes in Revelation 1:7? (2) To what extent do the separate quotations and their combination belong to the early Christian tradition used by John? (3) How and where did this combination of quotations come into being? (4) What does John aim at with this combination of quotations in this context? John makes use of the combination of God's eschatological agent as depicted in Daniel 7 and the "pierced one" from Zechariah 12 into one figure, to present the traditional early Christian eschatology, phrased in Old Testament terms, as the basis and the starting point of his book.

Opsomming

Johannes se gebruik van Skrif in Openbaring 1:7

In hierdie artikel word vier vrae gestel. (1) Watter Ou-Testamentiese gedeeltes haal Johannes aan in Openbaring 1:7? (2) In watter mate behoort die afsonderlike aanhalings, en hulle kombinasie tot die vroeg-Christelike tradisie waarvan Johannes gebruik maak? (3) Hoe en waar het hierdie kombinasie van aanhalings tot stand gekom? (4) Wat wil Johannes bereik met hierdie kombinasie van aanhalings in sy boek?

Johannes gebruik 'n kombinasie van die eskatologiese gesant van God soos aangedui in Daniel 7 en die "deurboorde" uit Sagaria 12 om een figuur daar te stel. Hierdie kombinasie stel

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die vroeg-Christelike eskatologie in Ou-Testamentiese terme en hy gebruik dit as die basis en vertrekpunt van sy boek.

1. Introduction

The Revelation of John contains many materials that were derived from the Old Testament, but no marked Old Testament quotations, that is, more or less verbatim and thus recognisable borrowings which are introduced or concluded by a formula that makes clear that the words in guestion come from Scripture, such as "it is written" or "the Scripture says". If I may rely on the passages in italics in the text of Nestle-Aland²⁷ and on the marginal references of that edition, there are fourteen verses in Revelation which contain unmarked Old Testament quotations, that is, more or less verbatim and thus recognisable borrowings without an introductory or closing formula. In addition, there is an almost endless series of Old Testament allusions to be found in this Biblical book. So there are many Old Testament materials, but no marked Old Testament quotation. In this respect, the Revelation of John is similar to the Jewish apocalypses that we know from the last centuries before, and the first century of our era. A marked quotation always constitutes, in a sense, an argument based on authority, and therefore it does not fit in well with an apocalypse, which derives its authority from the circumstance that the person who poses as its author, had a direct experience of heaven. For one who directly communicates with heaven, there is no need to make use of the authority of God's earthly word. It is evident that the Old Testament is John's Holy Scripture and he relies heavily on it for his language, his images, and his theology, but he does not explicitly argue on the basis of the Old Testament.

John derives his Old Testament materials mainly from the latter prophets and from Daniel, whom he very probably considered to be a prophet,² just as he also saw himself as a prophet (Rev. 1:3; 10:11; 19:10; 22:7, 9, 10, 18, 19). It seems that, taking into account the length of Old Testament books, Daniel has supplied most materials to John, and almost half of these Danielic materials come from the vision of "one like a son of man" in Daniel 7 (see Beale, 1998:60-61; cf. Moyise, 2001:121). Among the minor prophets, the writings of Joel and Zechariah were relatively important quarries for

Daniel is also considered to be a prophet in, e.g. 4QFlorilegium 1-3 ii 3; Matthew 24:15; Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 10.249, 267-268; see also Ginzberg, 1928:413, note 76.

John. According to the list of quotations and allusions in Nestle-Aland²⁷ the four chapters of Joel have supplied sixteen allusions, and the fourteen chapters of Zechariah have supplied one unmarked quotation and 32 allusions. These preferences of John seem to be easily explicable if one takes into account the visionary and expressive character of these two prophetic books. In any case John's visionary imagery has been coloured thoroughly by the Old Testament prophets, including Daniel.

An important question is to what extent John's use of Scripture is original. It would be interesting to investigate to what extent John agrees, in his selection and combination of Old Testament materials, with his fellow early Christian authors on the one hand, and with earlier and contemporary Jewish apocalyptic authors on the other. My conjecture would be that he has much in common with both groups, but that he is also original in certain respects, for instance in his predilection for Ezekiel (see Kowalski, 2004).³

In this article I will, by way of a random check, pay attention to Revelation 1:7. This is the first one of the fourteen verses from Revelation that have been partly italicised in Nestle-Aland²⁷, and according to the indications in the margin of this edition, the verse is supposed to contain unmarked quotations from Daniel 7:13, Zechariah 12:10 ff., and Genesis 12:3; 28:14. The text reads as follows:

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!Ιδοὺ ἔρχεται μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν,
καὶ ὄψεται αὐτὸν πᾶς ὀφθαλμὸς
καὶ οἵτινες αὐτὸν ἐξεκέντησαν,
καὶ κόψονται ἐπ! αὐτὸν πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς.
ναί, ἀμήν.
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Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, also those who pierced him; and all tribes of the earth will lament on account of him. Yes, amen.

The verse occupies a strategic position within the Revelation of John: it comes immediately after title, letter opening and doxology (Rev. 1:1-6), and it is followed by God's presentation of himself as

Manning (2004:22-99) demonstrates that whereas Ezekiel is relatively frequently used in the Qumran literature, there is only a very limited interest in this prophet in other Second Temple literature, apocalypses included.

"the Alpha and the Omega", "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (Rev. 1:8). This is in turn followed by the introductory vision (Rev. 1:9-20; for the introductory function of Rev. 1, see Hoffmann, 2005:212-245) and the letters to the seven churches (Rev. 2:1-3:22).

In my article, I intend to ask four questions:4

- Which are the Old Testament passages from which John quotes in Revelation 1:7?
- To what extent do the separate quotations and their combination belong to the early Christian tradition used by John?
- How and where did this combination of quotations come into being?
- What does John aim at with this combination of quotations in this context?

I hope that my answers to these questions will constitute a modest contribution to our insight into John's use of the Old Testament and into its early Christian roots.

2. Which are the Old Testament passages from which John quotes in Revelation 1:7?

In answering this question, we should of course take into account that in introducing an unmarked quotation, an author always has a certain amount of liberty with regard to word order, vocabulary, et cetera. The clause $\mathring{\iota} \delta o \mathring{\upsilon} \ \mathring{\epsilon} \rho \chi \epsilon \tau \alpha \iota \ \mu \epsilon \tau \mathring{\upsilon} \tau \ \upsilon \epsilon \varphi \epsilon \lambda \mathring{\upsilon} \upsilon \ unmistakably comes from Daniel 7:13; it is a translation of the Aramaic words obvious, but is does not agree exactly with one of the known ancient Greek Old Testament translations, and it is not possible to retrace it to one of these translations. The rest of Revelation 1:7 largely derives from Zechariah 12:10, particularly the words <math>\mathring{\upsilon} \psi \epsilon \tau \alpha \iota$, $\mathring{\epsilon} \xi \epsilon \kappa \acute{\epsilon} \nu \tau \eta \sigma \alpha \nu$ and $\kappa \acute{\upsilon} \psi \upsilon \tau \alpha \iota \acute{\epsilon} \pi ! \alpha \mathring{\upsilon} \tau \acute{\upsilon} \nu$, which constitute a translation of $\mathring{\upsilon} \psi \epsilon \tau \alpha \iota$, a translation that is not immediately obvious but not incorrect either, this Greek translation is equally both correct and obvious; in this case as well, it does not precisely agree with one of

There are of course many other relevant questions to be asked, see, e.g. Thompson (2000).

the known ancient Greek Old Testament translations, and it is not possible to retrace it to one of these.

The editors of Nestle-Aland²⁷ consider, as I said, the words $\pi \hat{a} \sigma \alpha \iota$ αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς as an unmarked quotation from Genesis 12:3 or 28:14. The LXX indeed offers there this combination of words, but it is very much the guestion whether their occurrence in Revelation 1:7 should be explained by a reference to these verses from Genesis. The seguel to the Zechariah passage offers a much more obvious explanation. The prophecy that they will look on the pierced one is followed by an extensive prophecy of wailing on account of this pierced one. In Zechariah 12:12 we read in the Hebrew text: וספדה הארץ משפחות משפחות לבד, "the land shall lament, each tribe by itself"; the LXX translates: καὶ κόψεται ἡ γῆ κατὰ φυλάς φυλάς. Whoever read these words in a universal perspective, could easily understand הארץ or $\hat{\eta}$ $\gamma\hat{\eta}$ as "the earth" instead of "the land". In what follows, a series of lamenting tribes is mentioned; it ends, in verse 14, with כל משפחות משפחות משפחות כל משפחות כל "all tribes that are left, each by itself": in the LXX: πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ αἱ ὑπολελειμμέναι φυλὴ καθ! ἑαυτήν. Whoever continued reading in a Hebrew or Greek text after Zechariah 12:10, could easily fill in "all tribes of the earth" (כל משפחות הארץ) / $\pi \hat{\alpha} \sigma \alpha \iota$ מוֹ $\Phi \nu \lambda \alpha \iota$ $\tau \hat{\eta}_S \gamma \eta_S$) as the subject of the anonymous "they shall lament" of verse 10: the only thing that was needed was to combine verse 12 and verse 14. So it is unnecessary to appeal to Genesis 12:3 or 28:14.5 Moreover, it is not very probable that the author of Revelation would think here of these Genesis passages: in Genesis, "all tribes of the earth" appear in a positive light, because they are blessed in Abraham, but in Revelation, they appear in a negative light, because they are the opponents of the Christian church (see, e.g. Rev. 11:9-10; 12:5; 13:7-8; 14:6, 8).6

The words $π \hat{a} σ α ι$ $α \hat{i}$ $φ υλα \hat{i}$ $τ \hat{\eta} \varsigma$ γ $\hat{\eta} \varsigma$ occur in Matthew 24:30 as well, in an allusion to Zechariah 12:10 (to be discussed below). In NA²⁷, there is no marginal reference to Genesis at Matthew 24:30, but it reads correctly: "Zch 12,10.12.14".

According to Beale (1998:100-105), "all tribes of the earth" play a positive part in Revelation 1:7 because they also do so in Zechariah. According to Bauckham (1993:318-322), they play a positive part because they also do so in Genesis 12:3. It seems to me that the new context of the quotation in Revelation primarily shows how John interprets the quotation, and that the appeal to Genesis 12:3 is unnecessary, as Bauckham (1993:320-321) implicitly admits.

3. To what extent do the separate quotations and their combination belong to the early Christian tradition used by John?

Both separately and in combination, the two quotations occur several times elsewhere in early Christian literature. The words from Daniel 7:13 on "one like a son of man" coming with the clouds of heaven are put in the mouth of Jesus in all three versions of the "synoptic apocalypse", always as an unmarked quotation (Mark 13:26 and parallels); the same happens in Mark and Matthew in the interrogation of Jesus by the high priest (Mark 14:62; Matt. 26:64). Unmarked quotations are also found in Revelation 1:13; 14:14, and there are allusions in Matthew 25:31 and John 5:22, 27. Justin Martyr quotes more than once from Daniel 7:13, always with some form of marking.⁷ Daniel 7:13 is also used in Jewish apocalyptic literature from the last centuries before, and the first century of our era.8 We should also take into consideration that the entire chapter Daniel 7, the vision of the four animals and "one like a son of man" together with its interpretation, and not just verse 13, has attracted attention in early Christianity.9 The circumstance that we meet the use of Daniel 7:13 in several traditions which are independent of each other, shows that the application of this text to the second coming of Jesus must have started at a very early stage.

Together with the following verses, Zechariah 12:10 must have been fairly familiar also in early Christianity (see Menken, 1996:167-185). Apart from the quotation in Revelation 1:7, there is a marked quotation in John 19:37, and there are allusions in Matthew 24:30 and the Epistle of Barnabas 7:9. This passage from Zechariah is also used several times by Justin, mostly in the form of a marked quotation. ¹⁰ In this case as well, the Old Testament passage is found in several early Christian traditions which are independent of each other, and its application to Jesus' second coming must have

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⁷ See First Apology 51.9; Dialogue with Trypho 14.8; 31.3; 32.1; 76.1; 79.2; 126.1; in addition, there are allusions: Dialogue with Trypho 86.1; 110.2; 120.4.

⁸ See 1 Enoch 46:1 ff.; 48:6; 62:7; 4 Ezra 12:32; 13:3; Sibylline Oracles 5:256, 414.

⁹ See, e.g. Luke 1:33 (Dan. 7:14); 2:19 (Dan. 7:28); Revelation 13:5 (Dan. 7:8, 11, 20).

¹⁰ See First Apology 52.11-12; Dialogue with Trypho 14.8; 32.2; 64.7; 118.1; 121.2; 126.1.

started early (in conformity with his habit, the fourth evangelist makes future eschatology into realised eschatology in interpretation of Zech. 12:10). Another circumstance favouring an early date is that the Christological potential of the text (consisting in the identification of God and the pierced one, and in the terms "only one" and "firstborn") is not yet exploited. In this case as well, it should be noted that the interest in Zechariah 12:10 is part of an early Christian interest in a larger literary unit, that is, Deutero-Zechariah as a whole. 11 A remarkable thing is that in early Christianity, the famous clause on looking on the pierced one has a very constant textual form, that deviates from all other known textual forms: ὄψονται εἰς ὃν ἐξεκέντησαν, "they shall look on him whom they have pierced" (as in John 19:37). That is, the verb $\delta \rho \hat{a} \nu$ is used, and the grammatical obscurity of the Hebrew text with either a double object or an oddly construed relative clause is avoided. In the rest of the passage, the textual form is much less constant; fixed elements are κόψονται, "they will lament", and φυλή, "tribe". The fixed textual form, indicative of a testimonium, 12 is also recognisable in Revelation 1:7.

In addition, it is striking that the combination of Daniel 7:13 and Zechariah 12:10 which we meet in Revelation 1:7, is also found elsewhere in early Christian literature. We see it in Matthew 24:30: καὶ τότε κόψονται πάσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ὄψονται τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ μετὰ δυνάμεως καὶ δόξης πολλῆς, "and then all tribes of the earth will lament and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with great power and glory". In his source Mark (13:26), Matthew read: καὶ τότ ϵ ὄψονται τὸν νἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου έρχόμενον έν νεφέλαις μετὰ δυνάμεως πολλῆς καὶ δόξης, "and then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds, with great power and glory". Apparently, Mark's ὄψονται reminded Matthew of Zechariah 12:10 in the early Christian version, and this caused Matthew to add the clause on the lament of all tribes of the earth. Justin also combines Daniel 7:13 and Zechariah 12:10. In his Dialogue with Trypho 14.8, he discusses the second parousia of Christ, ὅτε ἐν δόξη καὶ ἐπάνω τῶν νεφελῶν παρέσται, καὶ ὄψεται ό λαὸς ὑμῶν καὶ γνωριεῖ εἰς ὃν ἐξεκέντησαν, "when he will have

See, e.g. Matthew 21:5 and John 12:15 (Zech. 9:9); Mark 14:27 and Matthew 26:31 (Zech. 13:7); Revelation 22:1 (Zech. 14:8).

My use of the term *testimonium* does not imply the hypothesis of a written collection of testimonies; see also below.

arrived in glory and on the clouds, and your people will see and will know him whom they have pierced". The odd construction $\gamma\nu\omega\rho$ ($\zeta\epsilon\iota\nu$ $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ betrays that the Zechariah verse with $\delta\psi\sigma\nu\tau\alpha\iota$ $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ is the basis of Justin's wording.

The three documents in which we meet the combination of Daniel 7:13 and Zechariah 12:10, are independent of each other. To my mind, Revelation does not depend on Matthew, and Matthew does not depend on Revelation. Justin knows Revelation (*Dialogue with Trypho* 81.4) and Matthew, but in *Dialogue with Trypho* 14.8 he does not seem to depend on one or both of these, for whereas in Revelation and Matthew "all tribes of the earth" see the pierced one, in Justin only the Jews do so. In any case, the origin of the combination of Daniel 7:13 and Zechariah 12:10 must lie before Matthew and Revelation. Another agreement between Matthew and Revelation is that in both "all tribes of the earth" $(\pi \hat{\alpha} \sigma \alpha \iota \ \hat{\alpha} \iota \ \varphi \nu \lambda \alpha \iota \ \tau \hat{\eta}_S \ \gamma \hat{\eta}_S)$ are lamenting. This interpretation of those who lament in Zechariah 12:10 on account of what follows (see above) apparently lies before Matthew and Revelation as well.

To my mind, it is not very probable that the combination of Daniel 7:13 and Zechariah 12:10 comes from a written collection of *testimonia* (so recently again Albl, 1999:254-259); in that case one would expect less difference between the sources. I would rather think of an oral tradition in which a few brief wordings derived from the Old Testament were more or less standardised (for a comparable conclusion, see Yarbro Collins, 1996:159-172).

4. How and where did this combination of quotations come into being?

To early Jewish and early Christian interpreters of Scripture, the combination of passages from Daniel 7 and Zechariah 12 must have been a legitimate one, because the two passages are analogous, that is, they have at least one word in common (not necessarily the most important word or words) and they have a similar content (see Menken, 1996:52-53 [with the literature mentioned there], 83-84, 88-89, 94-95, 117-118, 131-136, 159-160, 195, 197). The similar content is evident: both passages were considered to be about the manifestation of God's eschatological agent and the final submission of God's enemies. The common word legitimising the combination

¹³ Justin ascribes the combination of quotations to Hosea and Daniel.

must have been, as far as I can see, the Greek word $\phi \upsilon \lambda \dot{\eta}.^{14}$ The word occurs several times in Zechariah 12:12-14 in the LXX, always as a translation of the Hebrew word additional It also occurs in Daniel 7:14 in Theodotion, as a translation of the Aramaic word word all peoples, tribes and languages will serve him"). The Aramaic word ("and all peoples, tribes and languages will serve him"). The Aramaic word word (it occurs a few times in Biblical Hebrew as well) is usually translated, in both the LXX and Theodotion, by $\phi \upsilon \lambda \dot{\eta}.^{16}$ If I am right in assuming that the two Old Testament passages have been combined on account of their analogy, then the combination must have been a combination of *Greek* texts. Moreover, the universal tendency of Daniel 7:14 may have left a trace in the final words of the quotation from Zechariah ("all tribes of the earth"). As I said, all words may have been derived from Zechariah 12:12, 14, but the universal perspective may well have been influenced by Daniel 7 (cf. also Zech. 14:17).

The textual analogy explains the legitimacy of the combination; in addition, we should ask the question what the motive for precisely this combination may have been. As we have seen, Daniel 7:13 was an important Old Testament testimony, in early Christian apocalyptic eschatology, of the second coming, from heaven, of Jesus. Zechariah 12:10 adds two important elements. Firstly, God's eschatological agent is now identified as one who has been pierced. The Old Testament contained comparatively few materials to support the Christian concept of a suffering Messiah; Zechariah 12:10 was one of the passages that could positively sustain this concept. Secondly, the passage from Zechariah speaks of the eschatological vindication of the pierced one (at least in its interpretation in Matthew and Revelation): everyone, even those

According to Beale (1984:155-156), the common word must have been "stone": the Son of Man of Daniel 7 was associated with the shattering stone of Daniel 2, and Zechariah 12:3-4 is about a similar stone. To my mind, this explanation is needlessly complex, because the link between the two passages only works through association with other passages.

¹⁵ In the LXX, $\delta \hat{\eta} \mu \sigma_S$ is most frequently found as a translation of משפח (ca. 150 times), but this equivalent occurs almost exclusively in lists in Numbers and Joshua. $\Phi \upsilon \lambda \dot{\eta}$ translates משפחה in more than 40 instances, which makes it second in frequency.

¹⁶ Altogether ten times; it is translated by $\lambda\alpha\delta\varsigma$ in Daniel 3:4 LXX, and by $\check{\epsilon}\theta\nu\sigma\varsigma$ in Ezra 4:10. In Daniel 7:14, the LXX translation deviates too much from the Aramaic to establish which Greek word serves as a translation of the Aramaic πακ.

who killed Him, will look on Him at his coming, and will lament on his account. Thus the combination of the two Old Testament passages and their interpretation in relation to each other yielded some sort of overall concept of Christian eschatology: the crucified Jesus will come with the clouds, and He will be vindicated before the whole world.

We have already seen that the combination of Daniel 7:13 and Zechariah 12:10 presupposes the use of a Greek Biblical text; it must therefore have occurred in a Greek-speaking environment. Besides, this environment must have been a Jewish-Christian environment, considering the interest in a Christian eschatology that was legitimated by Scripture. It is important to note that apparently at an early stage of the development of tradition, Jewish-Christian scribes worked with Greek Biblical texts.

That the combination of Old Testament passages in Revelation 1:7 goes back to the use of a Greek text, is not immediately relevant to the old question of whether John, the author of Revelation, made use of Hebrew or Greek Biblical texts (for a survey of and some critical reflections on this debate, see Moyise, 1999). The reason is that Daniel 7:13 and Zechariah 12:10 were already combined at a pre-Revelation level. In any case, there are serious indications that John used both Hebrew and Greek texts, and if we may assume that he was aware of the character of the traditional combination of Biblical passages that he incorporated into his work in Revelation 1:7, we may consider the verse as one more piece of evidence of John's familiarity with a Greek Biblical text.

5. What does John aim at with this combination of quotations in this context?

Finally, some brief reflections on the question of what the author's aim with the combination of Daniel 7:13 and Zechariah 12:10 might have been. A few years ago, Lietaert Peerbolte (2001:133; see also Hoffmann, 2005) wrote the following on the Christology of Revelation:

The multitude of images that the seer John makes use of in his description of Christ, is overwhelming. Nevertheless, it can be systematized up to a point. If one tries to word the common

denominator, it is the dialectical paradox of the Lamb that acts as an avenging judge (translation – MJJM).¹⁷

In Revelation, Jesus is at the same time "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev. 5:5) and "the Lamb as if it had been slaughtered" (Rev. 5:6). As the Lamb that has been slaughtered, He is "worthy to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing" (Rev. 5:12; cf. verse 9). Immediately preceding this passage, in the letter opening and the doxology, Jesus is first said to be "the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth", and then He is said to be "the one who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood" (Rev. 1:5-6). The paradox of the Lion as Lamb or the Lamb as Lion is at the basis of the Christology of Revelation.

Precisely this paradox can be perceived in Revelation 1:7 as well: Jesus is the one who will come with the clouds, but He does so as the pierced one. The eschatological ruler and judge is the same as the crucified one. As already seen, John has put the combination of quotations in Revelation 1:7 at a strategic place at the beginning of his book. I would suggest that he has put the combination there to present the traditional early Christian eschatology, phrased in Old Testament terms, as the basis and the starting point of his book. In any case, there is a striking parallel between the Christological paradox of Revelation as a whole and the paradox of the Old Testament pierced One coming with the clouds. In what will follow in Revelation, the coming of the crucified one, an expectation John shares with those who preceded Him in faith and with his fellow-believers, will be a recurrent theme (see, e.g. Lietaert Peerbolte, 2001:119-133).

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[&]quot;De veelheid aan beelden die de ziener Johannes gebruikt in zijn weergave van Christus is overweldigend. Toch is het mogelijk een zekere systematisering te geven. Indien men poogt deze christologie op één noemer te brengen, dan is deze gelegen in de dialectische paradox van het Lam dat optreedt als wrekende rechter."

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Kernbegrippe:

Christologie gebruik van die Ou Testament in die Nuwe Testament Openbaring van Johannes

Key concepts:

Christology Revelation of John use of the Old Testament in the New Testament