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THESES of

the PhD dissertation of

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The influence of the book of Jeremiah on Pauline theology

Biblical Theology and Religious Studies Programme

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Summary of the dissertation:

The goal of the dissertation is to give an overview of three theological themes, found both in Jeremiah and in the Pauline letters, and to argue for an influence of Jeremiah over the theology of Paul. The themes are: God's calling to be a servant of the Lord; the new covenant and consequentially the knowledge of the Lord and boasting; lastly God's presence in the redeemed community. The dissertation considers deeper, less direct levels of intertextuality, like allusion, echo, conceptual influence and cultural intertextuality. In each theme, first the particulars of the book of Jeremiah is considered, followed by an overview of Paul's understanding of the same theme. Throughout the dissertation, the parallel development of thought and the similarities are highlighted.

Theses of the dissertation:

1. **The intertextuality between the Old and New Testament goes deeper than direct quotations.** The NT writers and their text was deeply influenced by the OT and that influence is better investigated on several levels. The most visible form of intertextuality is direct quotation, when the NT writers directly reference one or more OT text. Besides quotations, allusions, echoes, conceptual influence and cultural intertextuality all point to important links. Between the book of Jeremiah and the Pauline letters, these latter will be more prominent: theological

ideas, conceptual movements without direct or large semantic correspondence.

2. **The book of Jeremiah portrays an intimate, complex understanding of prophetic ministry.** The call and commission narrative contains several important elements of the prophetic self-understanding which are evident throughout the rest of the book.
 - a. For Jeremiah, existence and ministry are inseparably tied together: God had chosen him before his conception, the goal of his existence is to serve God. Unsuccessful ministry causes him to curse his existence.
 - b. His calling is the sovereign will of the Lord; it compels him and highlights that he can only rely on him, not on any of his own merits or acts.
 - c. From the beginning, suffering and hardships are a part of his prophetic ministry. His authority and authenticity are questioned; he must fight against false prophets and suffer isolation.
 - d. The prophet shares a close and ambiguous relationship with God: sometimes he mirrors God's emotions, other times he laments because of his sufferings.
3. **The apostolic ministry as portrayed in the letters of Paul has numerous parallels with the book of Jeremiah, while in certain points, takes an opposite approach.**

- a. Paul understands his calling and ministry as the reason and goal of his existence: he is called “from his mother’s womb”. His life and ministry are tied together.
 - b. Paul constantly highlights that his ministry only depends on the sovereign decision of the Lord, its content and direction comes from the Lord; he is compelled to follow God’s will.
 - c. Suffering and hardships follow his ministry, and he must fight against false teachers and people questioning his authority.
 - d. In the light of Christ’s sacrifice, his suffering is reason not to lament, but to boast.
4. **The new covenant in Jeremiah focuses on the forgiveness of sins and the knowledge of the Lord. Knowledge of the Lord (and his sovereign grace which makes knowing him possible) is the only right basis for boasting.** Although the idea of an everlasting covenant is present throughout the OT, only Jeremiah uses the phrase ‘new covenant’.
- a. The basis of the new covenant is the sovereign, new act of grace of God and the full forgiveness of sins, of which the Lord “will not forget”.
 - b. It is characterized by the knowledge of the Lord through God’s law written in the hearts of his people.
 - c. The only right basis for boasting is the grace of God, as it is given in the new covenant and results in the knowledge of the Lord. human wisdom is false, and those who do not know God are fools.
5. **Paul identified God's new covenant with the grace revealed in Christ's death and resurrection. This new act of grace and new covenant form the basis of the apostle's boasting.**
- a. Christ's death and resurrection are the new covenant spoken of in the Old Testament (and by Jeremiah), which we can receive only through God's sovereign grace.
 - b. In the new covenant, God's Spirit writes Christ's law on our hearts, through which we can know him.
 - c. The new covenant completely transforms the understanding of the concepts of merit/boasting and wisdom: the knowledge and grace of God are the sole basis for boasting, not any other merit or human greatness. Through inversions, the apostle points to the fact that God's wisdom, though foolish to the world, is the only thing worthy of boasting, while human wisdom, in the light of the cross, is foolish.
6. **Among the people of the new covenant, God is present in a completely new form: the temple is not rebuilt, but a paradigm shift takes place, and God builds up his people as holders of his presence, as a temple.**
- a. In God’s judgement, the temple loses its function, no longer carries the presence of God; as it is prophesied in the calling of Jeremiah, the

temple is destroyed. A characteristic word to the restoration is ‘building up’ – however, there is no talk of a new temple which will be built up by the people.

- b. In the restoration and new covenant, the people will be built up by God. God’s presence is with his new covenant people, without the need for a physical representation or intermediary. The nations of the earth will come to the people, to this presence of the Lord so that they may know the Lord. In this sense, the function of the temple is fulfilled by the people, and they themselves are the temple of the Lord.

7. Paul speaks of the churches as God's temple, His building, in which God dwells. This highlights their special status and the expectations that come with it, and at the same time has missiological implications.

- a. Paul repeatedly refers to his calling and mission, the key word of which is building: building up the church community, building up and increasing their knowledge of God. Christ is the foundation on which all Christians are built, and through God's Spirit he dwells in them.
- b. The mandate of the new covenant churches is to live and act in a manner worthy of the bearers of God's presence and to demonstrate the righteousness and grace of the Lord to unbelievers.