Son of God and Son of Man - Part 2 Testimonies of the New Testament

5. THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE HON-ORARY TITLES IN THE NT

The fundamental question regarding the two honorary titles in the New Testament (NT) is: How were the promises of the Old Testament (OT) received, processed and ultimately interpreted?

However, in our context we are particularly interested in:

- a) Where in the NT do these two honorary titles occur?
- b) In which context do we come across them, and respectively, how do these two honorary titles relate to each other in context and to the other messianic propositions?

From the analysis of these terms, usable parameters can be compiled which unlock for us the unterstanding of both honorary titles within their time frame. Our effort should be, on the one hand, to develop the evidence which Jesus himself provides regarding these honorary titles, and on the other hand, to recognize the theological intention of the author by which he wants to communicate to us his kerygma.

For the purposes of this investigation we will orient ourselves according to

the Gospel of Mark in order to conduct a specimen analysis regarding the two honorary titles. For comparison we will consult parts of the Gospel of John.

6. SON OF GOD AND SON OF MAN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

6.1 Son of God in the NT The term Son of God (SG) occurs 47 times in the NT. It is a term which Jesus applies rarely to his person. This honorary title is mainly applied as a third party testimony to Jesus.

Based on their occurrences in the NT, three essential forms of usage of the term SG can be determined which appear primarily in the Gospels. In the other writings of the NT this honorary title attains an "expanded" meaning.

6.1.1 Testimony about Jesus

The term SG occurs primarily as a confession or testimony with reference to Jesus the Christ and his person through his environment. The evangelists Mark (1,1) and John (20,31) employ this honorary title as a testimony to Jesus.

When the angel Gabriel announced to Mary the birth of Jesus, he testified to her that this child will be the SG (Luk.

1,35). The devil (Mat. 4,3f par.) and the demon possessed (Mk. 5,7 par.) also recognize that Jesus is the SG but their testimony was rebuked.

After the rescue from the storm the disciples confess that Jesus is the SG (Mat. 14,33 par.). Also Peter confesses that Jesus was the expected SG.

Lastly, it is the centurion at the cross who confesses that Jesus "was" truly the SG in Mark 15,39.

6.1.2 Accusations against Jesus Another usage of this honorary title is related to the accusations of the Jews against Jesus. On the one hand, he is interrogated by the Sanhedrin: Are you the Son of the blessed God? (Mk. 14,61). On the other hand, he is mocked at the cross: Help yourself if you are the SG (Mat. 27,40.43). Interestingly, non-Jews only asked Jesus whether he is the King of the Jews but not whether his is the SG. The title SG is only used in the context of the Jewish environment, with the exception of Mk. 15,39.

6.1.3 The "only begotten" Son of God While the Synoptics show only the two forms of usage of this honorary title. the Gospel of John provides another usage which describes Jesus as the "only begotten" SG (Joh. 3,18). Particularly John employs this terminolgy respecitvely "only begotten Son" (Joh. 1,4) in order to define the "unique" position of lesus. Whether this term (Gr. = MONOGENOUS) refers to the testimony in Psalm 2,7 remains unsettled. Certainly the issue here is to incorporate the uniqueness of Jesus and the witness of the resurrection into the message of the gospel.

6.1.4 The "exalted" Son of God In Rom. 1,4 respectively Acts 9,20 Jesus is understood as the "exalted" SG who unites in himself all messianic terms and honorary titles. The differentiation between the diffrent honorary titles in post-Easter times plays no decisive role anymore, as we shall see in due course.

6.2 Son of Man in the NT The honorary title Son of Man (SM) occurs 83 times in the NT. 80 times in the Gospels, once in Acts and twice in the Apocalypse of John.

In Acts 7,56 Stephen mentions this honorary title while seeing in a vision shortly before his death the SM standing at the right hand of God. In the book of Revelation this title occurs twice in connection with a vision each. Rev. 1,13 and 14,14 are analogous to the vision in Dan. 7.13 and they introduce the different stages of the revelation. In these three occurrences outside the Gospels the issue is neither a confession nor a denotation of lesus but rather a descriptive explanation of the visions. Hence the 80 other occurrences are limited to the Gospels which attests to a relatively high density!

6.2.1 Only Jesus speaks about the Son of Man

In contrast to the three occurrences outside the Gospels, all occurrences in the Gospels are exclusively attributed to Jesus personally. No disciple, no listener nor a Scribe employs the honorary title SM. Only once in Joh. 12,34 the people ask: Who is this SM? For they seem not to understand whom Jesus is talking about in this instance.

6.2.2 The Son of Man is referred to by Jesus only in the third person

When Jesus speaks of the SM he talks about him without exception in the third person. It seems as if although the SM and he himself are one and the same person, there is no completion yet – as we shall see later.

6.2.3 The Son of Man is the bearer of the "heavenly" epiphany

The occurrences of the SM in the NT predominantly describe the character traits of a "heavenly" person. This person carries mandates like: forgiveness of sins, coming with the angels of heaven and conducting the final judgment. At the same time also incarnation, suffering and death are assigned to his person. All references to the SM seem to have no direct relationship with the honorary title SG except once in the Gospel of John and once in Mark.

7. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SON OF GOD AND SON OF MAN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

As already indicated in the OT, we have to deal with two eschatological imaginations respectively prophecies in the Jewish-semitic history of revelation which refer to the life and the end of humanity.

7.1 The problem of dual prophecy in Judaism

On the one hand, we have the earthly-eschatological Messiah who will execute dominion and deliverance on earth while bearing "priestly" authority in himself. This is the Son of God.

On the other hand we have the heavenly-eschatological judge who reigns in heaven with the angels bearing the authority of the eschatological judgment in himself, such as: forgiving sins, judging and giving eternal life. This is the Son of Man.

These two different eschatological aspects in Jewish tradition could <u>not necessarily</u> be harmonized, as will be illustrated in the story of the raising of Lazarus from the dead (Joh. 11):

When Iesus had arrived in Bethany and Martha approached him, Jesus said to her: Your brother will rise from the dead (v23). Martha's response to this is unambiguous and without doubt: I certainly know that he will rise from the dead - at the resurrection on ludgement Day (v24). Therefore Martha was aware of the resurrection of the dead in analogy to the Jewish tradition in Dan. 12. Then the Lord lesus reveals to her that he himself is "the resurrection and the life" and he subsequently asks her: Do you believe this? (v25-26). Martha's answer to this question is no longer unambiguous: Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God who has come into the world (v27). Because in her response she does not directly refer to the affirmation lesus made, that he is the resurrection and the life.

Now it should be assumed that Martha would believe that Jesus is able to raise Lazarus from the dead. However, if we read further in verse 39, we see how she tried to prevent him from having the stone removed from the tomb – since Lazarus was already decaying. Therefore we clearly perceive that she did not really believe the affirmation of Jesus

that he was the "resurrection and the life". To be sure, Martha did believe in Jesus as the "Messiah", who is the "earthly" Son of God. But to confess him as the Lord in heaven who possesses power over death and life, was too audacious for her. She was not able and even not permitted to believe this as a pious Jew. For according to Jewish understanding the SM lives with the angels of heaven, whereas the SG lives on earth.

This was exactly the set of problems which Jesus encountered among his people, the Jews. They had indeed these two different prophecies regarding the SG, the Messiah, and the SM. the judge of the world, which they, however, were not able to reconcile with each other. Even though - as already mentioned - many passages in the OT would permit a "fluent" transition in interpretation between both honorary titles (e.g. Psalm 2,7), a pious lew would not dare to cross a certain boundary in order to ascribe such supernatural authority to the anointed SG. the "earthly" Messiah. as the SM, the "heavenly" judge, owned. This authority, according to their opinion, was solely confined to heaven.

Therefore it was the task of Jesus especially towards his disciples and his other followers, to demonstrate and explain step by step the connection between these two eschatological parameters which were concealed behind the two honorary titles SG and SM.

An example for how Jesus tried to explain this can be found in the Gospel of John 5,19ff:

In this pericope Jesus proclaims that the Son of God – the Messiah – has authority to give "eternal life" to those who believe in him (v24). Jesus provides proof for this authority in verse 27 with the substantiation: He (the Father) has given him (the Son of God) the authority to carry out the judgment because he is the Son of Man.

Thus the "heavenly" SM provides the eschatological basis for the fact that the SG will receive this glory in the future respectively has already received it. Without the promise of the "heavenly" Son of Man in the OT there would be no prophetic basis for the fact that the Son of God could own this authority.

It is important to note here that the SM is presented in a manner as if every listener should know it. Did the listeners understand what Jesus told them or did they refuse to believe it?

7.2 The Gospel: Implementation of the "dual" prophecy

Strictly speaking the SG is, according to Jewish-semitic tradition, only an "earthly" man who is "anointed" (HAMASIEH) and equipped with supernatural power. On the contrary, the SM is the "heavenly" bearer of the divine power. Only when the SM is located "within" the SG, can the SG be equipped with the divine authority of the SM.

This is the prophetic pattern of the incarnation of God in its full dimension! And it is in this instance that "what no eye has seen and no ear has heard!" (1 Cor. 2,9; Is. 64,4) takes place. The SM has become ONE with the SG in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. This

is the fulfillment of the dual prophecy of the OT which is not easily reconcilable for a monotheist. In fact it is not understandable without the gift of the Holy Spirit!

7.2.1 The Johannine concept

In the Gospel of John the raising of Lazarus from the dead leads to the completion of the miraculous deeds of Jesus and proves him as the Lord over life and death. This miracle, therefore, introduces the end of the discussion about the authority of the SM, as if it were an interim result in the johannine work.

In chapter 12 and 13 this question is finally dealt with and the SM is portrayed as the one who has glorified the father in heaven and whom the father wants to glorify now (12,23 and 13,31). After this, the honorary title SM no longer occurs in John. From now on a very intimate relationship between God and Jesus is developed, as Father and Son, in the communion of the Holy Spirit.

Graphic 1

In the SG/SM graphic of John we can see a parallel structure of the revelation and meaning of the two honorary titles SG/SM. In regular intervals these two titles are treated simultaneously and the connection between each other is explained in detail respectively attested to by miracles. The aim was to reveal to his disciples and the people that the "earthly" SG is at the same time the "heavenly" SM, as demonstrated on the basis of Joh. 5 (Graphic 1/2) and 13 (Graphic 1/2). This line of argument, that the SG owns the authority of the SM, begins with chapter 4 and ends with chapter 13.

7.2.2 The synoptic concept

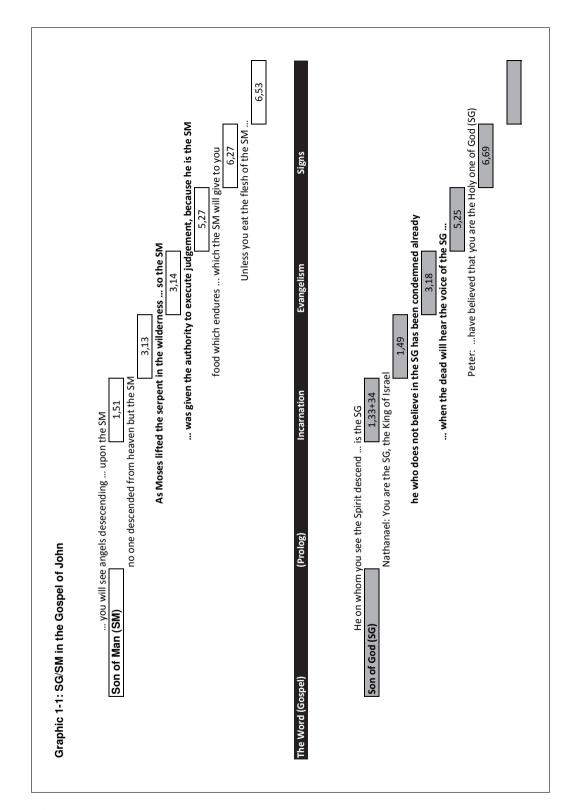
Whereas the revelation of the SM in the Gospel of John is closed without establishing a direct link with the passion narrative - Jesus only promises that the SM must be glorified, not the SG - the theme of the SM and the SG remains interdependent in Mark until the end. The so-called interim result which is drawn in the Gospel of John through the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead and marking the end of the honorary title SM. does not appear in the same manner in Mark and the Synoptics. In Mark, the connection of the two honorary titles is clarified only at the end (Graphic 2).

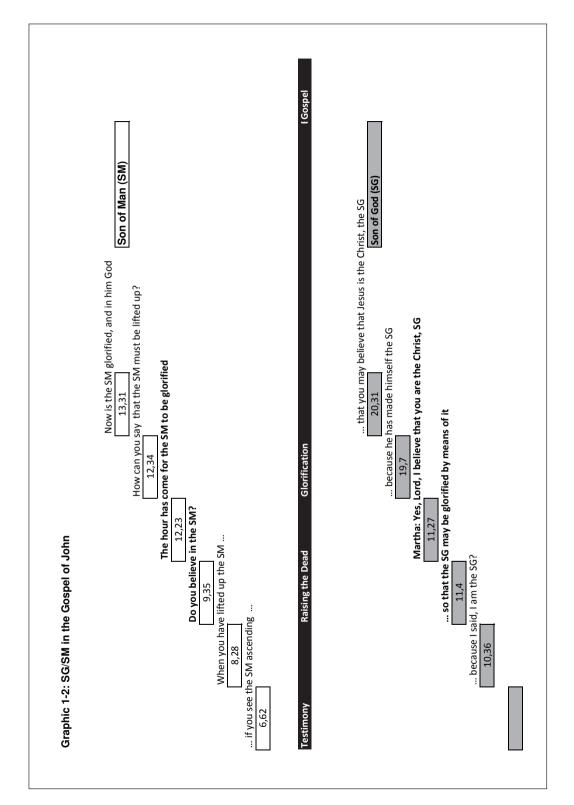
Graphic 2 - Part 1: The successive composition of the respective honorary titles:

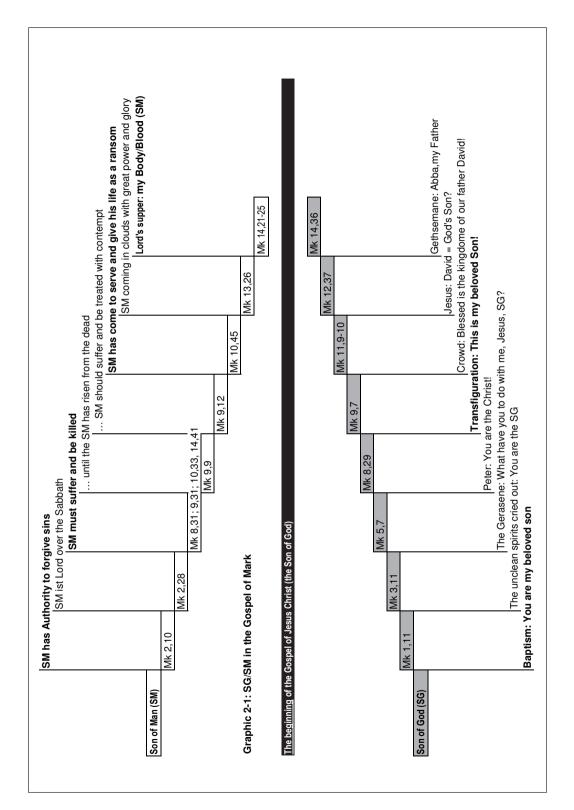
In the first part of this graphic we see the Son of Man in the upper line (white) being revealed step by step in the Gospel of Mark and his task interpreted in connection with the salvation history.

- First of all the SM has the authority to forgive sins and to change laws (the Sabbath).
- Subsequently the destiny of the SM is revealed: to suffer, die and rise from the dead.
- Finally the task of the SM is explained at the Lord's Supper: it is the "body" and the "blood" of the SM that we eat and drink in the Lord's Supper. This knowledge is very crucial for eschatology.

In the lower line (grey) we can see how the SG is revealed and recognized by his environment in Mark and - in contrast to John 5,25-27 - he







	at the right hand of Power swer (compare John 18,36f) ey crucified him - and divided his garments	Mk16,9-14 Jesus appears to his disciples Jesus, who was crucified - he has risen Mk 16,9-14 Jesus appears to his disciples Angels in the tomb (compare Mk 8,38) Mk 16,14b He rebuked their uneblief (Judge) Mk 16,55 HIS signs are seen	man was the SG! The King of the Jews have said so	Mk 16,8
Graphic 2-2: SG/SM in the Gospel of Mark	Son of Man (SM) I am; and you will see the SM seated at the right hand of Power Jesus made no further answer (compare John 18,36f) Prophecy: They crucified him - and divided his garments	Gospel Sanhedrin Judgement Crucifiction Death Resurrection Mk 15,24 Mk 15,39 Mk 14,61 Mk 15,26 Mk 15,34 Mk 16,5	Centurion: Truly this man was the SG! The inscription of the charge read: The King of the Jews Pilat: Are you the King of the Jews? Jesus: You have said so Son of God (SG) Are you Christ, the Son of the Blessed?	

is not revealed by Jesus himself but through God and other persons. This is an essential difference between the Synoptics, who follow Mark, and the Gospel of John.

- the two testimonies which come directly from heaven are significant in this instance:
- a) the first time during the baptism of Jesus (Mk 1,11) which introduces the beginning of his ministry
- b) the second time during transfiguration (Mk. 9,7) which introduces his passion narrative (v9-10)
- These two testimonies from God are supplemented by testimonies of the netherworld which, however, are denied the right to testify, afterwards the testimony of Peter and of the people.
- Finally Jesus himself picks up the theme of the Son of God (Mk. 12,35ff) in order to explain by means of Ps 110,1 to his followers that the Son of David, who was indeed understood in the Jewish tradition as an "earthly" being, could not really be the descendant of David but rather must be of "heavenly" origin, otherwise he could not seat himself at the right hand of God "in heaven"! This is the first attempt in the Gospel of Mark to establish the connection between SG and SM.

Graphic 2 - Part 2: Fusion and reversion of the two prophetic lines:

In the second part of the graphic we see how these two lines – the SM and the SG – converge.

The High Priest asks Jesus if he is the Son of God. The answer of Jesus is affirmative but he adds a very important issue to his answer: I am he (the GS) and you will see the MS sitting at the

right hand of the Mighty One and coming with the clouds of heaven (Mk. 14,62).

In this satatement Jesus witnesses openly and without exception:

- that he is the SG, the Messiah and heir of David on the royal throne in Jerusalem (Ps. 110,1)
- and that he is also the second eschatological person, the SM, who will come with the clouds of heaven in oder to judge the living and the dead (Dan. 7 respectively 12).

This sentence constitutes the core message in the Gospel of Mark and forms its climax (the Kerygma). It says that the SM and the SG are one and the same person in union of personality and that – this is of decisive importance here – the SG is not only an "earthly" Messiah in the sense of the davidic progeny, but at the same time also a "heavenly", since he is the SM who stands in heaven before God according to Daniel 7.

According to Jewish-semitic understanding, this kerygma has broken all rules of the jewish law and the greatest commandment of the Thora: You shall have no other gods beside me (Deut. 5,7).

Consequently Jesus has revealed himself as God and – according to human discretion – disrupted all traditions of Judaism. This of course meant the death penalty for him. Since the Jews were incapable of comprehending the dual nature of the eschatological prophecy, they had to indict him for blasphemy (Mk 14,63f) which was followed by his crucifixion.

When Jesus was brought later on to

Pilate, we can see that he did not respond to his questions, since he would not have been able to explain to Pilate, a non-Jew, who the SM is (compare on this Joh. 18,36 where Jesus talks to Pilate). On the cross later on it was written above him "King of the Jews" which, according to Jewish tradition, identified him as the "earthly" SG.

This redactional peculiarity of Mark is continued, since the consequence which resulted from the verdict of the Sanhedrin did reverse the perception of the two honorary titles once and for all times

At the moment of his death Jesus shouts: My God, my God, why have you <u>forsaken</u> me? (Mk. 15,34).

"My God" is the call of the SM to God and not that of the SG, since according to Jewish tradition the SM in Daniel 7 is understood as an angel who according to Is. 6,3 is only permitted to exclaim: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts". The SG on the throne of David, on the other hand, is allowed to address God as: "Abba, dear father!", as Jesus did in the garden of Gethsemane.

However, the call of the SM to God is not the decisive aspect here, but rather his question: "Why have you forsaken me?"

As God forsakes him (through the arrival of death), the SM who is of "heavenly" origin and therefore immortal, becomes a "mortal" like the SG who is indeed of "earthly" origin. Being "forsaken" by God, the SM entered the realm of the dead and thus became equal to the "earthly ones"!

In contrast, the SG who would die naturally like his father David is praised by the centurion in Mark, as if he were immortal: Truly, this man was God´s Son! (15,39).

Here, the two different aspects of the honorary titles have now been reversed: The "heavenly" SM who is immortal dies on the cross like an "earthly" man under mockerv. The proclamation by the Gentile centurion that lesus is God's Son. lets this honorary title acquire a different meaning than in the context of Jewish tradition. For a Jew the SG is an "earthly" king. But for a Gentile this title could be understood in the sense of a Hellenistic god-man (THEIOS ANER). Did Mark intend here to allude to this extended meaning. or was its mentioning in this instance purely accidental?

In this context it is important to recognize the transformation process which the honorary titles in Mark experience. The SG who is of earthly origin, is now perceived as a "heavenly" being, whereas the SM who is intrinsically of "heavenly" origin, is perceived through the arrival of death as an "earthly" being. In Mark these two honorary titles of Jesus intersect each other at the moment of his death.

The reversal of the meaning of these titles is expanded further in Mk 16,6 where it is stated: ... Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified one, has risen! In other words, the "earthly" Jesus (the SG) now belongs to the "heavenly" beings because he is risen. On the other hand, the angels who rule with the SM in heaven now appear before men on earth and proclaim the resurrection

of Jesus. Thus the "earthly" Jesus has now ascended to the heavenly beings whereas the "heavenly" angels have come to the earthly ones.

The Messianic secret in Mark is reversing the meaning of the honorary titles. It turns the Jewish-semitic perceptions of the SG and SM of the pre-Easter church upside down and introduces the eschatology which was indeed familiar to most Jews, yet nobody knew how it would become reality. Mark has disclosed this mystery in a redactional dramaturgy.

8. THE KERYGMA IN POST-EASTER TIMES

We have just observed the relationship between SM and SG in the Gospels, and how the sources from the life of lesus have been processed differently. It is beyond any doubt that the miracles which lesus did and the words he spoke exceeded by far the coverage of the Gospels.1 The guestion we have to ask in this context. however, is: Why did each evangelist choose his particular set of miracles and words - we have noticed several differences between Mark and John - and what were they trying to communicate to us with this? Or, to ask the other way around: What is the focal message of the Gospel to the recipients? According to the analysis which has been conducted, is it possible to find a common denominator between the evangelists or even of the entire NT?

If we look at the Gospel of Mark in connection with this question we may ascertain an interesting structure of the message: 8.1 Convergence of the dual prophecy Mark introduces his Gospel with the superscription: <u>Beginning</u> of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (the Son of God)

If we consider the word "beginning" in connection with the stucture we have analyzed, we may arrive at the deliberation: Could it be that Mark views the life of Jesus and his end on earth respectively the unification of the two prophecies, SM and SG, on the cross of Golgotha, merely as an initial step toward the fulfillment of all other prophecies of the OT (eschatology)? If this assumption were true, it would be able to explain the two circles of problems in the Gospel of Mark:

First, why the Gospel of Mark has been composed so tersely and in one strand - from Galilee to Jerusalem - whereas we know from the Gospel of John that Jesus moved around throughout the whole land several times during his ministry; and

secondly, why the Gospel of Mark ends so abruptly after the report of the crucifiction and resurrection (irrespective of the question of Mk. 16,8ff) without reporting in detail the events after the resurrection like the other Gospels.

When comparing Mark with the other Gospels it becomes obvoius that all of them have processed the problem of SM/SG even though they have contributed even more material concerning the words and works of Jesus. Regarding the content, they had to sustain the same common thread: the fulfillment of the dual prophecy through the unification of SM and SG in the person of Jesus

Christ and his death on the cross which led to his physical resurrection from the dead.

We could also say it is this red thread which passes through all Gospels and represents the core message (kerygma) of all Gospels, even of the whole NT. According to Mark everything else would be secondary and merely an implication of this prophetic fulfillment (inception of eschatology).

8.2 The inthronization of Jesus Interestingly, Jesus is never addressed with "Lord" (KYRIOS) in the Gospels and only rarely with "Christ", but as depicted above, predominantly as SG or Son of David. Jesus himself, however, spoke about himself primarily in the third person as SM.

However, if we read about Jesus in Acts or in the letters, we find that he is mostly called "Christ". In some cases he is also called SG respectively Lord (KYRIOS) in addition to the title "Christ". This shifting of usage of the honorary titles shows how the understanding of Jesus Christ after Easter has been moved respectively supplemented. In this process the term SM actually disappeared entirely from the post-Easter church – except in the visions – and we might say, the title SM was completely replaced by the honorary title "Christ".

In Rom. 1,1-4 Paul summarizes the creed of the post-Easter church of Jesus Christ as follows:

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart to preach the gospel of God which he promised before through his prophets in the Holy Scripture,

about his Son who is born from the tribe of David according to the flesh,

about the Son of God who is appointed in power through the Spirit who sanctifies, through the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

In this "faith formula" of the post-Easter church we recognize very clearly the separation between the "earthly" and the "divine" prophetic line pertaining to Jesus Christ, though with some differences to the Gospels:

- a) ... from the tribe of David: since Jesus is from the tribe of David, this means that he is of "earthly" origin!
- b) ... appointed in power through the Spirit: this means that Jesus now partakes in the "divine" nature!

Here the SG initially is an earthly one, as in the Gospels, in order to become subsequently God-like through the power of the resurrection.

Thus the principle of dual prophecy of the OT was not altered in the post-Easter time but the allocation of the honorary titles has been clarified and the reasoning of Jesus in Mk 12,35: "Why do the Scribes say, Christ is not the Son of David?" has been solved.

8.3 The inception of eschatology Paul – and similarly the post-Easter church – did understand that after the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead 2. Sam. 7,14 referred to the "earthly" – whereas Psalm 2,7 respectively 110,1 referred to the so-called "heavenly" – Messiah.² The "earthly" Messiah incorporated the gifts of the SM in himself and God testified to his "heavenly" authority by raising him in "power" from the dead. Although according to the OT this power of the eternal resurrection may only be attributed to the SM, through the virgin birth of Jesus, his death and his resurrection. However, it became effective in personal union with the SG. Therefore, the SG partakes in the authority of the SM.

Paul closes this post-Easter creed with the honorary title: "Jesus Christ our Lord". In analogy, this title could be interpreted as follows:

- Jesus Christ: the earthly Messiah (SG) who is
- Lord: the one who sits at the right hand of God = SM (the heavenly Messiah).

According to Mark this heavenly inthronization of the "earthly" Messiah has already taken place in two stages:

First in his investiture, when he was appointed as an "earthly" SG to the prophetic and priestly ministry of the king.

Second at his crucifixion, where the SM surrendered his "heavenly" right to immortality and died; this way he attained atonement for all flesh-born!

These two structures resulted in the fact that the earthly SG became a "heavenly" Messiah who conquered death.

Seen in this light, the verse "beginning of the Gospel" in Mark (1,1) has the following meaning:

- a) God comes to his judgment through the SM: the entry of the "heavenly one" into this world and thus the beginning of eschatology; and
- b) Resurrection of the SG from the dead: the "beginning" of the parousia and eternal life.

This kerygma in Mark is purported and defined by the controversy between Son of Man and Son of God: the coming, death and resurrection of Jesus has inaugurated the Good News; the parousia (resurrection from the dead) which now follows, is an ensuing effect of this "Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

ENDNOTES

- ¹ See Joh. 20:30: "And Jesus did many more signs before his disciples which are not written in this book."
- ² Compare on this the article "Der Messias", by H. Gese, Zur biblischen Theologie; especially pp. 147-151, where the set of problems of the identification of the "heavenly" MS with the "earthly" GS is treated, particularly in the process of death and resurrection.

PETER WASSERMANN, Stuttgart, is Mission Director of EUSE-BIA-Missionsdienste, founder of EUSEBIA School of Theology (EST) and co-editor of STT. International lecturing ministry in the area of Biblical Theology, Islam and Missions.