

IS THERE A RULER OVER THE EARTH? A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WIS 1:14 AND JN 12:31

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SUMMARY: I. *Wis 1:13-15*. 1. Translation notes. 2. The term ἄδης in Wis, LXX, and Hellenism. II. *Jn 12: 30-32*. 1. Translation notes. 2. Who is the ruler of this world? III. *Conclusions*.

The Bible is an ensemble of texts which exegetes often study in order to find the connections between them and their deeper message. It is obvious that, because biblical books have been written over such a long time and in different socio-political and economical contexts, the biblical theology has its own subtleties. This is the question that we want to treat here: are there critical oppositions (or contradictions) between some books of the Catholic Bible or are they just different ways of explaining the same truth?

Most scholars hold that the Book of Wisdom was written around 40-30 BC in the flourishing and placid Alexandria of Egypt. On the other hand, according to a great group of scholars, the Gospel of John was finished around AD 90-110 in Syria or Asia Minor, after a time of bloody persecution against the first communities. Wis 1:14d states firmly that «[There is] no kingdom of Hades over the earth», being preceded by the positive phrase: «Because God did not make death» (Wis 1:13a). That said, in the Gospel of John, Jesus claims that «the ruler of this world will be cast out» (Jn 12:31b). Thus, a question emerges: is it possible to understand both texts without concluding that they are in contradiction, that is, can they be understood in a complementary way? Was Jesus wrong when predicting the throwing out of the prince of this world or was it a failure of the sacred author of the Wisdom of Solomon? How can there be a “ruler of this world” if over the earth¹ there is no “kingdom of Hades”?

The aim of this paper is to compare both texts. We commence with textual criticism in order to examine the variants. Although many exegetes will start directly from the critical editions of the Bible, we consider that there are some subtleties in the variants which can aid in understanding the two texts. Then, we will try to understand properly the term of “Hades” and discover who Jesus refers

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¹ We admit that “earth” is equivalent to “world” in Jn.

to when speaking of the “ruler of the world”. Thus, we will examine the intended meaning of both sacred authors and ascertain whether there is a contradiction between Wis 1:14 and Jn 12:31.

I. I. WIS 1:13-15

This pericope forms an inclusion with Wis 2:23-24. Both texts are the beginning and the conclusion of the section regarding the impious and unrighteous. The unit 1:13-15 is about how life is for the ungodly and constitutes a diptych with 3:1-19, which regards the comparison between the life of the wicked and the life of the righteous.²

1:13 ὅτι ὁ θεὸς θάνατον οὐκ ἐποίησεν
οὐδὲ τέρπεται ἐπ’ ἀπωλείᾳ ζώντων.

1:14 ἔκτισεν γὰρ εἰς τὸ εἶναι τὰ πάντα,
καὶ σωτήριοι αἱ γενέσεις τοῦ κόσμου,
καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν αὐταῖς φάρμακον ὀλέθρου
οὔτε ἄδου βασιλειον ἐπὶ γῆς.

1:15 δικαιοσύνη γὰρ ἀθάνατός ἐστιν.

1:13 Because God did not make death
nor delights on the destruction of the living.

1:14 For [He] created all things to exist,
and the creatures of the world [are] bringers of salvation,
and there is no poison of ruin in them,
nor the kingdom of Hades [is] over the earth.

1:15 For righteousness is immortal.

1. Translation notes

We focus only on 1:14d, which is the concern of this paper. Nevertheless, we prefer to analyse it in its context, so as to better understand it. Hence the translation of the whole pericope.

Codex Alexandrinus (A) reads the variant οὐδὲ, a negative coordinating conjunction. Nevertheless, Ziegler³ and Rahlfs⁴ opt for οὔτε as it appears in the majority of Greek manuscripts. In any case, this variant is of little value to our study.

² All translations from the Bible are the author’s.

³ J. ZIEGLER, *Sapientia Salomonis*, Septuaginta. Vetus Testamentum Graecum XII,1, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2017³.

⁴ A. RAHLFS, R. HANHART, *Septuaginta, id est Vetus Testamentum Graece iuxta LXX Interpretes*, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart 2007.

With regard to βασιλειον, almost all scholars, among whom we have C. Larcher or G. Scarpat, agree in translating it as “kingdom”. Literally, the term refers to “what belongs to a king” or “what is fitting to a king” and hence, the normal translation should be “palace”. The main reason for the change is due to the fact that βασιλειον in the LXX is equivalent to βασιλεία, and in the abstract means “the power exercised by a king”, and concretely “the territory ruled by a king”⁵. The same idea is used again in Wis 5:16, where it is said that righteous people will receive a «beautiful kingdom».

Finally, A reads the determined article τῆς before the substantive γῆς “earth”. As only this codex and some minor manuscripts read this variant, and given that here we follow Ziegler in accordance with Rahlfs, we consider it irrelevant for our study.

2. The term ᾠδης in Wis, LXX, and Hellenism

It is clear that ᾠδης is not an unequivocal noun. As a matter of fact, its meaning varies depending on the text and context in which it is found. Firstly, we will analyse the distinct interpretation of Hades, and then we will explain them. According to M.V. Fabbri,⁶ the term can be understood in five different ways. These are:

- The God of the underworld.
- Death itself.
- The Devil himself.
- The Dwelling of dead.
- The Dwelling of impious dead.

Hades, the *god of Underworld*, was one of the main deities of Greek culture. His appearance in Greek texts dates from the sixth century B.C., including in texts such as the Iliad and the Odyssey. Thus, he has been present from the time of ancient Greek culture: he was the eldest son of Cronus and Rhea, the one who, with the help of his brothers Zeus and Poseidon, defeated the Titans and overthrew his father. Having seized the control of the whole cosmos, the brothers decided to divide it amongst themselves: Zeus received the sky; Poseidon, the oceans and seas; and Hades, the underworld. His dwelling was under the earth and six rivers separated his realm from the world of the living. Cerberus guarded the entrance and had the mission of not letting anyone enter or leave. Hades was also the god of metal, as it can only be found under the earth.

⁵ Cfr. T. MURAOKA, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, Peeters, Leuven 2009, 114.

⁶ Cfr. M.V. FABBRI, *Creazione e salvezza nel Libro della Sapienza: esegesi di Sapienza 1,13-15*, Armando Editore, Roma 1998, 132.

Hades had a wide cult,⁷ although some scholars claim the opposite. In fact, Serapis, which is the Egyptian Hellenistic name for Hades,⁸ was the protector god of Alexandria of Egypt! He was associated with and was taken as patron by Ptolemaic dynasty and his cult was especially concerned with the royal court. Nevertheless, he was the god of the *polis*, who unified the different populations of the city in order to create peace among the different factions of inhabitants. Moreover, the temple dedicated to him, the Serapeum, was so large and magnificent that it was considered the “daughter of the Library of Alexandria”.⁹

In this sense, it is possible that the author of the Wisdom of Solomon had in mind the god of Underworld, as a background, when writing his text. Nonetheless, it is difficult to assert that he wanted identify the term ἄδης with Serapis because it does not fit with the context of the pericope or with the LXX. Further still, the sacred author is Jewish! He has another religion, and so he did not follow Greek cults. It is possible to argue that he may have inserted the text within a polemic context against foreign gods, just like the prophets would speak about Baal in order to deny their existence, but it does not seem the case because of, as previously said, the context. In fact, as a Jew, he refers constantly to his monotheism, considering himself a worshipper of YHWH.

Hades as *death itself* is the second interpretation which Fabbri proposes. In Wis 2:1cd, the impious people claim that «there is no remedy when a man dies, and no one has been known to come back from Hades». It is true that, in this sense, ἄδης can be understood as “death” in Wis 2:1; but in our text, although both words are related, they actually express different concepts. In fact, “death” has its own Greek term: θάνατος. Thus, there is no need to interchange these words unnecessarily for they are not perfect synonyms. Doing this would lead to a misunderstanding of the text.

A further observation is that the term ἄδης appears two more times in Wis, but neither there can it be understood always and in an unequivocal way as “death”. These are the cases of Wis 16:13 and 17:13, which both make a reference to the “gates of Hades”. In these two verses, it would seem more logical to assume the idea of Hades as a physical place or as a spiritual state and not as death itself. In

⁷ For further information about Hades and its cult in archaic and classical ages, cfr. K. SEKITA, *The Figure of Hades/Plouton in Greek Beliefs of the Archaic and Classical Periods*, University of Oxford, Oxford 2015.

⁸ L. KAHIL, *Cults in Hellenistic Alexandria*, in M. TRUE, K. HAMMA (edd.), *Alexandria and Alexandrianism. Papers Delivered at a Symposium Organized by The J. Paul Getty Museum and the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities and Held at the Museum April 22–25, 1993*, Getty Publications, Malibu 1996, 77: «Many sources tend to identify Serapis with Hades, the Greek god of the dead, and the advisors of the king persuaded him that Hades-Pluto was the Greek name for the Egyptian name Serapis».

⁹ Cfr. KAHIL, *Cults in Hellenistic Alexandria*, 75-79.

any case, in a metaphorical sense it is legitimate to understand it that way. But, as far as we are concerned, it seems very forced and not a natural or proper reading.

Even though ἄδης in Wis 1:14 cannot be interpreted as “death”, we cannot reject the idea that the sacred author had this concept in mind as one closely related to his own concept of Hades. It is impossible to speak about Hades, understood in the literal sense of “place of the dead”, and not think about death. This is the reason why, in some sense, we can agree with M.V. Fabbri in understanding the term as “death itself”: because it is not possible to go to the Hades if one did not go first through the gates of the death.

Hades as the *Devil himself* is a difficult interpretation, because it would lead us to some confusion (perhaps even contradiction?) with Jesus’ speech in Jn 12:31. We will refer to this latter. In any case, a question arises if we follow this understanding of ἄδης: if God did not create death as Wis 1:13 states, is it possible that He did create the demons and his angels, as stated in the Book of Enoch? In fact, the fallen angels, according to Enoch (cf. 1 Enoch 1-36), can adopt human figures to fulfil their appetites. With regard to our book, Wis 2:24a also states that «death entered the world by the envy of the Devil».

Mazzinghi claims that «in the Old Testament there is already a personification of death that can be in the background of our author»¹⁰ and refers to Job 18:13 where death’s first-born appears. It is possible to admit this interpretation, as the author of Wis understands Hades as a closer-to-Hell personified reality. But, it is really difficult to understand ἄδης as the “Devil” in the other three texts where the term appears. In fact, it is not easy to comprehend “the gates of Hades” as referring to “the gates of the Devil”. Do the dead get into the Devil? In which part are they hosted? It seems more logical to understand it as a place or as a state. This leads us to the next interpretation: Hades as the place of the dead.

Hades as the *dwelling of the dead* refers to the place, not necessarily physical (as it could also be a state), where all people who die go. Both Hellenism and Judaism have some features in common regarding this dwelling:¹¹ it is a dark, misty, gloomy, underground place where the dead gather together. They do not have minds or memories or physical activity. Rather, they are a kind of empty shadow’s ghostly beings who merely wander. Hence, death is not understood as a total annihilation or as a fall into oblivion.

¹⁰ Cfr. L. MAZZINGHI, *Non c’è regno dell’Ade sulla terra. L’inferno alla luce di alcuni testi del Libro della Sapienza*, «Vivens Homo» 6/2 (1995) 245.

¹¹ Cfr. FABBRI, *Creazione e salvezza nel Libro della Sapienza*, 170. For a systematic study of how Greek, Jewish and other ANE religions interpreted the afterlife, Cfr. J. KROLL, *Gott und Hölle: der Mythos vom Descensuskampfe*, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 1963.

As J.H. Ellen says: «In all Ancient Near Eastern mythology of the underworld, it [Sheol] is a place of no return, a place of darkness and the depths of the earth».¹² This interpretation is the traditional one of Sheol in which Israel deeply rooted its belief in the afterlife. Moreover, this belief was common through the Ancient Near Eastern and the Mediterranean religions. Therefore, Ἅδης is the Greek translation that LXX uses for the Hebrew term שְׁאוֹל , which is widely used in the MT.

According to T.F. Glasson:

In the original Old Testament view of Sheol (the realm of the departed conceived as a vast cavern under the ground), there was no differentiation between good and bad. All alike shared the same fate. It was the same with the original conception of the Greek Hades. But as time went on Greek Hades underwent modification and a different fate for certain men was envisaged. It is important to notice that this development occurred among the Greeks much earlier than among the Jews.¹³

Thus, comprehending Hades as the *dwelling of the dead*, that is, the traditional concept of the Hebrew Sheol, is to understand it also as a closer-to-Hell personified reality. As a matter of fact, this interpretation fits better than the others in our text, especially with those that refer to the “gates of Hades”, but probably it is not the one that the sacred author had in mind. Furthermore, the author had a more developed idea of Sheol/Hades as he lived in a diaspora community influenced by Hellenistic culture and society.

Hades as the *dwelling of impious dead* is a more advanced idea that was developing in the core of Jewish diaspora communities. Without doubt, Hellenism broke into the shell of Jewish thinking and so reflects the texts of that time. For example, the idea of a double death and the one of immortality entered Judaism at this time. Such a paradigmatic model of Hellenism inculturation in Jewish thought can be found in the Book of the Wisdom of Solomon.

In this sense, D.J. Harrington writes:

While suspicious of the attractions of Hellenism, the author uses some of its terms and concepts to communicate with his Diaspora Jewish audience. He denies that God made death and that God delights in death (Wis 1:13). The death to which he refers here does not seem to be merely natural physical death. Rather, in 1:12 he implicitly introduces the concept of ultimate death (death after physical death) by warning about the evil consequences of “the error of your life” (bad behaviour) and “the works of your hands” (idolatry, see chapters 13—15). He also links righteousness with immortality, and declares in conclusion that “righteousness is immortal” (1:15). The

¹² J.H. ELLENS, *Afterlife and Underworld in the Bible*, in IDEM(eds.), *Heaven, Hell, and the Afterlife. Eternity in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, 1, Praeger, Santa Barbara 2013, 3.

¹³ T.F. GLASSON, *Greek Influence in Jewish Eschatology*, S.P.C.K., London 1961, 13.

idea seems to be that righteousness [...] is a necessary condition for enjoying eternal life with God.¹⁴

Thereafter, the traditional concept of Sheol was abandoned in favour of being the place where only the unrighteous dwell. Hence, Sheol becomes the place for the ungodly, whereas righteous people no longer “stay” there. So, Sheol is conceived as a place of punishment, idea more or less similar to the one that Catholic Church has of Hell. In this sense, righteous people do not go to Sheol but await the resurrection of Christ for participating in God’s divinity.¹⁵ This notion of awaiting place is presented in other passages of the LXX too, such as Ps 15:9-10 and 48:10-16.

To sum up, it is likely that the sacred author had in mind all five understandings of Hades when writing Wis 1:14. It is not easy to separate these concepts and understand them as such, without being influenced by the others. In fact, it should not be done, because the author relates to all of them in some way and a biased reading that does not take into account some of these ideas would lead to an incomplete comprehension of the text. In any case, it is highly probable that the writer’s main concept of Hades was as a place of punishment, that is, as a dwelling of ungodly dead. This idea would come from a developed Jewish traditional notion of Sheol due to Hellenistic influences.

II. JN 12:30-32

This pericope is placed just before the conclusion of the first book of Jn: the Book of the Signs, which embraces chapters 1-12 inclusively. Jesus proclaims that his hour has arrived: it is the hour of his death and resurrection.

12:30 ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν·
οὐ δι’ ἐμέ ἡ φωνὴ αὕτη γέγονεν ἀλλὰ δι’ ὑμᾶς.
12:31 νῦν κρίσις ἐστὶν τοῦ κόσμου τούτου,
νῦν ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου ἐκβληθήσεται ἔξω·
12:32 κἀγὼ ἐὰν ὑψωθῶ ἐκ τῆς γῆς,
πάντας ἑλκύσω πρὸς ἑμαυτόν.

12:30 Jesus answered and said:

“This voice did not come for my sake but for yours.

¹⁴ D.J. HARRINGTON, *Transcending Death. The Reasoning of the “Others” and Afterlife Hopes in Wisdom 1—6*, in D.C. HARLOW, K.M. HOGAN, M. GOFF, J.S. KAMINSKY (eds.), *The “Others” in Second Temple Judaism. Essays in Honor of John J. Collins*, William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2011, 211-212.

¹⁵ Cfr. CCC 632.

- 12:31 Now is the judgment upon this world,
 now the ruler of this world will be cast out.
 12:32 And when I am lifted up from the earth,
 I will draw everyone to myself.

1. *Translation notes*

As has been done before, when carrying out the textual criticism and commenting to some words, we will focus only on the verse that concerns our study, that is, the v.31. Nevertheless, we continue in translating the pericope, that is, the verses close to the v.31, because the pericope provides the context of the verses.¹⁶

With regard to *τούτου*, the demonstrative is omitted in Papyrus 66, codex Bezae and codex Washingtonianus, among others. Its omission does not greatly change the meaning of the sentence, so we prefer to follow the reading of Nestle-Aland.¹⁷

As far as *ἐκβληθήσεται ἔξω* is concerned, there are two variants. The first one, *βληθήσεται ἔξω* “will be thrown out” is read in Papyrus 66, codex Bezae and in some minor Latin manuscripts. The meaning of the sentence does not change because of *ἔξω* “outside”, but the NA reading emphasizes the verb with the prefix *ἐκ*. Consequently, the stress on “outside” is double: the verb itself with the prefix as well as the adverb. With respect to the second variant, *βληθήσεται κατω* “will be thrown down” is read in codex Koridethi, Sinaitic Palimpsest, in some Latin and Coptic manuscripts and in the writings of Epiphanius of Constantia. The verb is the same as in the first variant, so it needs no further explanation; but the adverb *κατω* “down” refers to the place where the ruler of the world is going to be cast. May this be a reference to Hades? Or does it refer to a casting out from heaven? As a matter of fact, the prophecy of Isaiah predicts that someone will fall from heaven to Sheol.

2. *Who is the ruler of this world?*

The expression *ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου* “ruler of this world” is utilized only by Jn in the whole New Testament. It can also be found in Jn 14:30 and 16:11. This expression is unique to the Gospel of John and it does not appear in the letters

¹⁶ The whole pericope is Jn 12:30-36, but for the motives of our study, we only focus on the interpretation of verses 30-32. For an interpretation and structural analysis of the whole pericope, cfr. I. DE LA POTTERIE, *L'exaltation du Fils de l'homme (Jn 12:31-36)*, «Gregorianum» 49/3 (1968) 460-478.

¹⁷ Cfr. B. ALAND, K. ALAND, J. KARAVIDOPOULOS, C.M. MARTINI, B.M. METZGER (eds.), *Nestle-Aland – Novum Testamentum Graece, 28th revised ed.*, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart 2012.

attributed to him. It is commonly accepted that the expression refers to the devil as a personal being, that is, to Satan or Beelzebub.

Paul uses some similar expressions,¹⁸ such as ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου “the god of this age/world” in 2 Cor 4:4. It is important to note that αἰὼν can be translated either as “age” or as “world”. In a similar way, Ignatius of Antioch speaks of ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου “the ruler of this age/world” in *Eph.* 17:1; 19:1; and so does Paul in 1 Cor 2:6; 2:8.

According to T. Löfstedt,¹⁹ the ruler can be:

- The Devil himself, as a personal reality.
- The Devil as a personification of sin.
- Judas.

The Devil as a personal reality is the first identification that the author makes of “the ruler of the world”. This interpretation is the most commonly accepted among exegetes but also among Christians in general. In this sense, T. Löfstedt states: «The notion that the world was somehow controlled by the devil was commonplace in early Christianity».²⁰ So, already from the beginning of Christian communities it is believed that there is a devil who is a personal being and who acts in the world. Accepting this interpretation means that Jesus speaks against a personal being that will be cast out.

Rv 12:9-10 expresses the same idea as Jn 12:31. It is true that the sacred author does not use the same terms, but he wants to show the same concept: the casting out of the great dragon, the ancient serpent. Nonetheless, in this case, this character receives not one but two names: the Devil and Satan. So, in Rv the prediction that Jesus says in Jn 12:31 comes to pass²¹, with the difference that now the name of the character appears. On this matter, G.R. Beasley-Murray states:

The assertion “Now the prince of this world shall be thrown out” manifests a use of apocalyptic imagery unusual for the Evangelist. [...] The Evangelist is not an apocalypticist, but it is difficult to believe that this assertion “Now the prince of this world shall be thrown out” is *not* linked with the Apocalypticist’s picture through the common traditions of the Johannine school.²²

¹⁸ We will not study them since they are not the aim of our inquiry.

¹⁹ Cfr. T. LÖFSTEDT, *The Ruler of This World*, «Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok» 74 (2009) 55-79.

²⁰ LÖFSTEDT, *The Ruler of This World*, 57.

²¹ It is important to note that in Jn 12, the place from which the «ruler of the world» is to be cast out is not specified. So, it is ambiguous: cast out of the earth or of Heaven? Notwithstanding, in Rv 12 it is clear that he is cast out of Heaven into the earth. Thus, saying that Rv 12 is fulfillment of Jn 12 is assuming that he is cast out of Heaven. For further information of this discussion, Cfr. BROWN, R.E., *El Evangelio según san Juan*, Ediciones Cristiandad, Madrid 1999, 801-802.

²² G.R. BEASLEY-MURRAY, *John 12,31-34: the eschatological significance of the lifting up of the son of man*, in W. SCHRAGE (ed.), *Studien zum Text und zur Ethik des Neuen Testaments: Festschrift*

And similarly M.-E. Boismard writes:

If the theme of the fall of Satan, the prince of this world, cannot be read elsewhere in the Gospel of John, it is expressed in analogous context in the Apocalypse which, if it is not of the same author, emanates from the same background.²³

There is also a link between these texts and Lk 10:18. There, after the returning of the 72, Jesus says that he observed Satan falling from heaven / the sky²⁴. These are the only three texts in the whole New Testament where the devil, supposing that Jn 12:31 refers to Satan, is cast outwards.

The Synoptic Gospels do not use the expression “ruler of this world”, but a similar one: Βεελζεβούλ ἄρχοντι τῶν δαιμονίων, “the prince of the demons” (cf. Mt 12:24; Mk 3:24; and Lk 11:30). Although the translations usually differ in English, both sentences have the same word as subject: ἄρχων. Furthermore, for John there is a negative conception of the world, as is explained later. Therefore, it is possible to establish a correlation between both expressions, that is, between “ruler of the world” and “prince of the demons”. In fact, the Synoptic Gospels give a concrete name to this “prince of the world”: Beelzebub. This is why, by comparing the four Gospels, we know it is the devil who is behind the expression: “the ruler of the world”.

In T. Löfstedt’s opinion:

When these texts refer to the devil as a ruler, they imply that he has subjects that obey him. If we can take the witness of the synoptic Gospels at face value, Jesus’ contemporaries believed in some kind of a demonic hierarchy with Beelzebub or Satan on top; compare Mt 12:24, Mk 3:22, and Lk 11:15 where Beelzebub, or Satan, is referred as “the ruler (ἀρχὼν) of the demons” and Mt 25:41, which implies that the devil has angels that do his will. We find the same notion in Jewish texts contemporary with the New Testament.²⁵

This interpretation fits perfectly with the various texts of the New Testament. In fact, since the first interpretations of the text and in the almost unanimous agreement of the exegetes, the character of the “ruler of the world” has been associated with the devil. This fits with the context of Jesus’ life, because he practices many exorcisms.²⁶ Moreover, in some of them, such as in Mk 5, Jesus

Heinrich Greeven, De Gruyter, Berlin 1986, 75.

²³ M.-E. BOISMARD, *Le prince de ce monde sera jeté en bas: Jn 12,31*, in A. DENAUX (ed.), *New Testament Textual Criticism and Exegesis: Festschrift J. Delobel*, BETL 161, Peeters, Leuven 2002, 179.

²⁴ The term οὐρανός can be translated in two senses: Heaven and sky. So, we prefer to show both of them and no opt for any in particular, because it does not affect the main aim of our study.

²⁵ LÖFSTEDT, *The Ruler of This World*, 57.

²⁶ It is curious to note that Jesus does not practice any exorcism in Jn, but he does in the other Gospels.

himself speaks directly with the demon. This is another reason in favour of conceiving the devil as a personal being or as a personal reality.

Devil as a personification of sin is the second interpretation that T. Löfstedt gives. He understands “the ruler of the world” not as a personal reality, but as the ensemble of all the sins and temptations of the whole world, that is, as the sum of all the wicked and evil forces. It is interpreted in an abstract way. Nonetheless, it is important to note that assuming this position does not necessarily mean rejecting the existence of the devil as a personal reality, but to understand this expression in a determined sense. It is possible to see the devil as a personal being in other passages, such as in the dialogues that Jesus holds with the demoniacs. Notwithstanding, exegetes who support this position generally conceive the devil as the combination of all wicked forces, sins and temptations of the world. This personification of sins and evil forces is supported by R.K. Bultmann²⁷ and by R. Schnackenburg.²⁸

Furthermore, the term κόσμος “world” in Jn always has a negative meaning, which generally is used in contrast with God and his divine power. The “world” is the place of evil-doers. Jn usually opposes this world, understood negatively, with the transcendent one, which is understood as the perfect one.

R. Leivestad is of the same opinion and claims that:

The intercession of Jesus is not concerned with the world, but only with those whom God has given him out of the world. The explanation of the apparent contradictions is partly that the positive statements reflect the reaction of the world. God wanted the world to be saved through Christ; the world rejected his love and was accordingly doomed to remain in darkness and death. [...] The world is not a neutral object of salvation, but primarily an active hostile power. It is in the service of the evil one (1 Jn 5:19). [...] The world really loves the darkness.

[...] The “world” becomes the comprehensive common denominator of all unbelief and hostility, a *massa perditionis*. In this pregnant sense, ὁ κόσμος or ὁ κόσμος οὗτος is a metaphysical, collective power, something more than the sum of all unbelieving people. It is the embodiment of all evil, of hatred, falsehood, darkness, and death.²⁹

Nevertheless, there is an objection to this interpretation: if “the ruler of this world” is conceived just as a personification and not as a real being, how can Jesus speak of him as someone who is coming in Jn 14:30? Is he not already in the world or rather, is he not the “world” (κόσμος) in a Johannine sense? Thus, if he is in

²⁷ Cfr. R.K. BULTMANN, *Theology of the New Testament*, II, S.C.M. Press, Waco 1955, 17.

²⁸ Cfr. R. SCHNACKENBURG, *The Gospel according to St. John*, II, Seabury Press, New York - London 1980, 39.

²⁹ R. LEIVESTAD, *Christ, the Conqueror. Ideas of Conflict and Victory in the New Testament*, MacMillan, London 1954, 203-204.

the world or is the world, they cannot come into it because he is already there! This is the reason why we do not accept this second interpretation.

That *Judas* is the ruler of the world is an interpretation that can be deduced from Jn 14:30. The near context to this verse is Jesus announcing that He has to leave this world but the Paraclete will come instead. However, in a wider context, He is speaking about his death and resurrection. In fact, in saying that “the ruler of the world is coming”, He refers to Judas when he comes with the Roman cohort, the officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees in the beginning of chapter 18. Actually, the sending of the Paraclete and the power of the world, regarding the fate of Jesus, are closely related: «the Paraclete will “prove the world wrong” and show how sin, righteousness, and judgment are brought to light in Jesus’ death and exaltation».³⁰

It is not that Judas can be identified as a personification of the devil, but as one of his instruments. As a matter of fact, the devil entered the apostle just after he ate the bread that Jesus offered to him (cf. Jn 13:27). The Evangelist explicitly states that Judas is the way in which the devil acts in the pericope.

In this regard, T. Löfstedt writes:

While Judas has a unique role in the passion narrative, he is in a sense representative of the world as a whole. Judas is identified with the ruler of this world because he is his willing accomplice in Jesus’ betrayal. Similarly, the judgment of the ruler of this world is the judgment of the world itself (cf. Jn 12:31; 16:11), because the world as a whole had from the beginning let itself be seduced to do the devil’s will (cf. Jn 8:44). And like Judas, the world as a whole did not believe in Jesus (cf. Jn 6:64; 16:9).³¹

Although Judas can be understood as an instrument of the devil, we cannot understand him to be the “ruler of the world”. The apostle was a person, with his limits and nature, who fell into the temptation of betraying Jesus. Thus, he cannot rule over the world. Besides, although Judas can be a referent in 14:30, it is certain that he is not so as the character of the other two verses that regard “the ruler of this world”.

III. CONCLUSIONS

In our analyses it has been necessary to distinguish between the different interpretations of Hades in order to know which one the sacred author of the Wisdom of Solomon had in mind when writing the book. By doing so, we can conclude that, because of Hellenistic influences, he conceived of Hades in a more developed way

³⁰ J.L. KOVACS, “Now shall the Ruler of This World be driven out”: *Jesus’ Death as Cosmic Battle in John 12:20-36*, «Journal of Biblical Literature» 114/2 (1995) 231.

³¹ LÖFSTEDT, *The Ruler of This World*, 73.

than the traditional idea of Sheol. For him, Hades was the place or state of mind where the wicked suffer punishment, whereas those who did good during their lives did not go to Sheol but awaited for participating in YHWH's divinity (cf. Lk 16:19-31).

Nonetheless, although this may have been the sacred author's main concept of Hades, it is not legitimate to discard other interpretations. As a matter of fact, he lived in an age and society where the Greek god Hades had a wide cult. Neither can we forget that he was a Jew who lived in the Diaspora, educated in a particular form of Judaism and way of thinking. Furthermore, death and the devil are closely related with the concept of Hades. For all these reasons, we have to keep in mind that these were other connotations of Hades.

On the other hand, the author of the Fourth Gospel was most likely referring to the devil when speaking of the "ruler of the world". In fact, the Synoptic Gospels give him a name, identifying him with Beelzebub, also known as "the prince of demons". The sacred author understood the devil as a personal reality, and not as something abstract. The temptations of the world and the sins of wicked people were conceived as the power of the world, but not as the "ruler of the world". There is a personal being who has command over the world, but he is not necessarily identified with the world. Likewise, Judas should not be interpreted as this ruler, for he was only an instrument in the hands of the devil, not the devil himself.

At this point, we can conclude that Jn 12:31 refers to the devil as a personal reality. As a matter of fact, this is the doctrine of the Catholic Church concerning the devil. Additionally, Wis 1:14d is right in stating that there is «no kingdom of Hades over the earth»! What the sacred author affirms is that evil-doers will have their punishment in Hades, which is not here! His idea of Hades is focused more on the afterlife than on the earthly life. Living persons do not suffer the torment of Sheol on earth, except those who opt for an evil lifestyle. Besides, this sentence is the negative way to express the previous verses, that is, that the whole creation is the bringer of salvation, just the opposite of his concept of Hades.

The main point of the establishment of a relationship between these two texts is to show that there is no contradiction between both texts. As a matter of fact, they are complementary in some way because this conception of Hades does not exclude a devil understood as a personal reality but, on the contrary, it requires it in order to better comprehend the biblical eschatology.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to compare Wis 1:14 and Jn 12:31 in order to establish whether there is a link between them. In these texts we find the terms "the king-

dom of Hades” and “the ruler of this world” respectively. In the first, we read: “there is no kingdom of Hades over the earth”; while in Jn, Jesus himself speaks of a “ruler of this world”. Is there a contradiction between these passages? How is it possible that there is a “ruler of this world” if on earth there is no “kingdom of Hades”? What did both sacred authors intend to convey?