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**Personification  
in the  
Old and New  
Testament.**

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

# Personification in the Old and New Testament.

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## Topics.

- The French, Italian, Greek and Hebrew language and personification.
- Wisdom patience and understanding personified.
- Jerusalem, Zion, Egypt and Babylon and personification.
- The daughters of Zion and the daughters of Jerusalem.
- The heavens trembled and the earth shook.
- The grave is ready to receive the king of Babylon.
- How are you fallen from heaven O' Day Star (Lucifer in the KJV)
- Mountains, hills and the foundations of the earth hear what the LORD says.
- You know him, the Spirit of truth for he dwells in you.
- When the Helper comes, he will bear witness about Christ.

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## INTRODUCTION

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The Bible often uses the language of personification. Since our English language very rarely uses personification and to understand much of the Bible especially prophecy it is important to understand the language of personification because the word of God, wisdom, understanding, patience and Jerusalem are all personified.

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## THE FRENCH, ITALIAN, GREEK AND HEBREW LANGUAGE AND PERSONIFICATION

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The French, Italian and the Spanish languages are all known as the romantic languages. This is because any noun is personified as either masculine or feminine, the Hebrew and Greek languages are the same. The following is an example of God's word being personified:

- He sends out his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly (Psalm 147:15).

Here God's word is pictured as a person running swiftly throughout the earth. Wisdom, understanding and patience are all personified and spoken of as woman even though they are not people and Jerusalem is spoken of as a mother with children. It is not only common for Greek literature to personify words especially if they are an attribute of human character, but also common for nouns to be spoken of as persons, but it is never the intention of the author using the Greek style of writing that a reader would embrace the personified word to mean a literal person.

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## WISDOM PATIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING PERSONIFIED

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- Wisdom cries without; she utters her voice in the streets (Prov. 1:20).
- Wisdom, "You are my sister," and understanding my intimate friend (Prov. 7:4).
- Does not wisdom cry? And understanding put forth her voice? (Prov. 8:1).

- Wisdom has built her house she has hewn out her seven pillars (Prov. 9:1).
- She (wisdom) has killed her beasts and furnished her table (Prov. 9:2).
- She (wisdom) has sent forth her maidens (Prov. 9:3).
- Let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect (James 1:4).

From these verses we see that wisdom is personified as a woman with maidens (young unmarried women who have never had sexual intercourse) and as a sister to men and as a woman who love wisdom. While understanding is personified as a kinswoman (a woman or girl who is somebody's relative) and patience is personified as a perfect woman.

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## JERUSALEM, ZION, EGYPT AND BABYLON AND PERSONIFICATION

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- He will shake his fist at the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem. (Isaiah 10:32).
- The virgin daughter of Zion despises and scorns God. (Isaiah 37:22).
- The virgin daughter of Babylon will no more be called tender and delicate. (Isa. 47:1-5).
- There is none to guide her (Jerusalem) among all the sons she has borne. (Isa. 51:18-19).
- Jerusalem, wash your heart from evil, that you may be saved. (Jer. 4:14).
- She (Jerusalem) has rebelled against me (the LORD). (Jer. 4:17).
- For I heard a cry as of a woman (Jerusalem) in labour, anguish as of one giving birth to her first child. (Jer. 4:31).
- Jerusalem sickness and wounds are ever before me. (Jer. 6:7).
- The daughter of Egypt shall be put to shame. (Jer. 46:24).
- O daughter of Jerusalem? What can I liken to you, that I may comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion? (Lament. 2:13).

From these verses Jerusalem is personified as a mother who has given birth to her first child and as a mother who has given birth, to many sons, but cannot find even one son to comfort and guide her. Jerusalem is also personified as a woman with a heart and as a woman who is full of sickness, rebellion and violence who oppresses her people and as a woman who has been swallowed up by her enemies (i.e., her seventy-years in captivity to Babylon).

The inhabitants of Jerusalem are also personified as a delicate woman and both the people of Babylon (the Chaldeans) and the inhabitants of Jerusalem are personified as daughters. The daughters of Jerusalem in these verses are personified as daughters who ignore God.

**Daughter:** comes from the Hebrew word (banah) and literally refers to a female child and by the Hebrew language a descendant or inhabitant. Figuratively it can refer to a nation, a company or a family. Daughter's carries the idea of one being the apple of the eye, but the word daughter does not always mean that the relationship is a good one. A parent can have a daughter they love, but the quality and condition of the relationship could be a tumultuous one or a valiant and worthy one. Likewise, it is when Scripture speaks of the daughters of God.

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## THE DAUGHTERS OF ZION AND THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM

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Zion is the hill Jerusalem is built upon, so the expression the daughters Zion maybe referring to the people of Judah, while the expression the daughters of Jerusalem are referring to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but this is not dogmatic since Zion is often used as a title of Jerusalem so in some Scripture the daughters of Zion may embrace all the people of

Israel. The titles daughters and sons of God has nothing to do with being male or female, daughters of God embrace both men and woman as does the title sons of God. Generally, the title daughters of God carry the idea that they are weaker or poorer in some way and need protecting and looking after while the title sons of God has the implication of people standing on their own feet. When the people of Israel are spoken of as virgin daughters it does not mean that they are pure and holy. The title, "Virgin daughters of God," does not automatically mean the people are doing what is right before God. They can be obedient virgin daughters or rebellious virgin daughters.

This is because the title, "Virgin daughters of God," does not refer to behaviour, but instead carries the idea of the people of Israel having only one husband (i.e., the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) meaning they only have one God (or should have) in contrast to the pagans who have many gods.

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## THE HEAVENS TREMBLED AND THE EARTH SHOOK

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- **2 Samuel 22:8:** "The earth reeled and rocked; the foundations of the heavens trembled and quaked, because he was angry.

This verse is taken from a song David spoke to the LORD on the day when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. (2 Sam. 22:12). The words, "The earth reeled and rocked; the foundations of the heavens trembled and quaked," mean that the battle was so great, the fear so intense, the destruction so enormous and the thousands of human bodies that were left on the surface of the earth for birds to feast on was so vast that the only way to describe the alarm, panic, terror, horror and magnitude of the battle and the widespread destruction of the land and its cities is to say, "The heavens trembled, and the earth shook out of its place." The writer is using biblical lofty language to convey to the reader the magnitude and enormity of the awful events and the overwhelming horror, killing, bloodshed and incalculable and unbelievable number of deaths that took place on the horrific day of this battle.

**NOTE:** in some of these battles thousands were slaughtered in one day.

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## HELL, AND THE GRAVE

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Because of the word Lucifer in (Isaiah chapter 14) and a lack of understanding the Bibles use of the language of personification hell and the grave has been misunderstood. The traditional interpretation of hell has been used to support in many religious circles a global belief by the secular world and multitudes of those who embrace traditional Christian teaching that hell is a place of eternal torment rather than accepting that the translators of the Bible have used the English word hell for the Hebrew word Sheol which simply means grave the place of the dead.

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## THE GRAVE IS READY, TO RECEIVE THE KING OF BABYLON

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- **Isaiah 14:9:** Sheol (the grave) (interpreted hell in the KJV) beneath is stirred up to meet you (the King of Babylon) when you come; it rouses the shades to greet you, all who were leaders of the earth; it raises from their thrones all who were kings of the nations.

This is not reality the Bible often uses the language of personification. Isaiah beautifully uses it in these next few verses to show the futility of pride and the foolishness of denying God. The grave is personified as a place full of kings who are dwelling in it and who stand up from their thrones when they see the king of Babylon arrive.

- **Isaiah 14:10-11:** All of them (the kings in the grave) will answer and say to you: (the King of Babylon) (v14) 'You too have become as weak as we! You have become like us!'  
<sup>11</sup>Your pomp (extreme pride) is brought down to Sheol (the grave) (interpreted hell in the KJV), the sound of your harps; maggots are laid as a bed beneath you, and worms are your covers.

If you are a person who loves the LORD and aims to live before him, but your life is in crisis or troubles and you see that those who do not even give God a thought are prospering and succeeding all around you, never feel God has removed His favour from you. Consider their end, the King of Babylon was called the glory of the earth's kingdoms, he had riches, wealth, fame, adoration and enormous power, but look at his eternal end, worms and maggots.

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## HOW ARE YOU FALLEN FROM HEAVEN O' DAY STAR (LUCIFER IN THE KJV)

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- **Isaiah 14:12:** "How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! (King of Babylon) (v14) How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low!

This verse is cited from the English Standard Bible the expression "O Day Star," is translated in the King James Bible as "O Lucifer," as the following verse shows:

- How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! (KJV) (Isaiah 14:12).

**Lucifer:** comes from the Hebrew word (heylel) (halal) it carries the idea of brightness, the morning-star, it means to be clear, and give light, to shine, to make a show, to boast, to be loudly and insistently demanding attention, to rave and celebrate loudly. It also carries the idea of boasting in self and being foolish, which clearly shows that the Hebrew meaning of Lucifer or Star in this context is extreme pride

**NOTICE:** there is not even a hint in the meaning of Lucifer that it means or even refers to some type of fallen evil angelic creature named Satan.

- **Isaiah 14:13-14:** You said in your heart, (the king of Babylon) (v4) 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; <sup>14</sup>I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'

These verses are shining a brilliant spotlight on the enormous arrogance and extreme pride the king of Babylon had dwelling in his heart and mind and his vain boasting. Now the LORD through Isaiah says:

- **Isaiah 14:15:** But you (the king of Babylon) are brought down to Sheol (the grave) (interpreted hell in the KJV), to the far reaches of the pit.

The pit is painted as an enormous hole in the ground with dead bodies buried within its walls. An easy way to understand this is to imagine today's armies going to war in a third world country and suffering extreme poverty. At the end of the battles thousands of soldiers are left killed on the surface of the earth. Obviously because of poverty it is impractical to dig separate and individual graves for each soldier so bulldozers are brought in and a massive pit is dug. All the dead bodies are laid in the pit and covered over with earth.

No doubt in the days of Babylon hundreds of slaves would have been digging these pits. It may help to comprehend this idea of a pit being dug for the dead in Old Testament times, to know that in many battles that King David and others fought over 20,000 could be killed in one day. The leaders of the armies (especially Israel's) would have been aware that disease would spread quickly if these bodies weren't buried as quickly as possible.

- **Isaiah 14:16-17:** Those (in the grave) who see you (the king of Babylon) will stare at you and ponder over you: 'Is this the man (the king of Babylon) who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, <sup>17</sup>who made the world like a desert and overthrew its cities, who did not let his prisoners go home?'

Remember this is not reality; it is a vision to show the reader the futility of pride and self-glory and the beauty of humility and giving God glory. It is interesting to notice as one reads Psalms every man God considers great is a man who in their heart and to their friends and the world around them always credits God for their gifts, their talents and their achievements unlike the king of Babylon who constantly praises himself and boasts to everyone around him of his power, his great victories and makes great speeches crediting himself for achieving and attaining them all.

- **Isaiah 14:18-19:** All the kings of the nations lie in glory, each in his own tomb (grave); <sup>19</sup>but you (the king of Babylon) are cast out, away from your grave, like a loathed branch, clothed with the slain, those pierced by the sword, who go down to the stones of the pit, like a dead body trampled underfoot.

In the language of personification the king of Babylon has gone down to the grave in the sense that he is dead, but it appears he has been killed in battle and his actual body is lying on the surface of the earth to be eaten by birds and the wild animals which of course was a total abomination and horror for someone of this era to die this way. Even though these people denied God they respected death and a dead body that is why the Pharaohs of Egypt built what is considered today one of the wonders of the world, the Pyramids and kings of Babylon built glorious Tombs for their dead bodies to rest in.

- **Isaiah 14:20:** You (the king of Babylon) will not be joined with them in burial, because you have destroyed your land (Babylon), you have slain your people. "May the offspring of evildoers nevermore be named!"

How amazing is this the King of Babylon thought he was one of the greatest and wisest kings on earth so much so he boasted of it to all the world around him, but in actual fact he was one of the most foolish, because it was through him that destruction came to his land. How true is this today, we get someone in power who denies the existence of God, but has the gift of speech and all the world thinks he is a messiah that is going to solve the troubles of the world. From an earthy perspective this man who denies God appears wise, but from God's perspective he was considered a fool.

**TODAY:** we live in a world where the system of Babylon rules. There is extreme riches and wealth to a selected few which is beyond what is acceptable workers are oppressed to profit the greed of the rich, (sweat shops and child labour etc). The world is full of extreme and excessive luxury, indulgence and materialism; these are all part of the Babylonian System. The local and immediate fulfilment of this prophecy was the destruction of Babylon and Israel and Judah returning to their beloved city Jerusalem, but it also echoes the ultimate destruction of the entire world system when the Lord Jesus Christ returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish Gods Kingdom of righteousness, justice joy and peace during his millennial reign on earth.

**For further information see the title:**

- Satan and his Family (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- Kingdom of God (ON WEBSITE MENU).

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## MOUNTAINS, HILLS AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE EARTH

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Mountains, hills and the foundations of the earth hear what the LORD says:

- **Micah 6:1-2:** Hear what the LORD says: Arise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. <sup>2</sup>Hear, you mountains, the indictment of the LORD, and you enduring foundations of the earth, for the LORD has an indictment against his people, and he will contend with Israel.

Mountains, hills and the foundations of the earth do not have ears. Mountains and the hills in this context refer to the leaders, the prophets and the rulers of Judah and Israel and the enduring foundations of the earth refer to the faithful remnant. Micah in these verses is calling the people of Judah and Israel to plead their case before the leaders, the prophets and the rulers and for them to listen to the collective voice of the people. He tells the faithful that the LORD is about to bring judgment on Judah and Israel

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## THE NEW TESTAMENT

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### THE WORD JESUS SPOKE WILL ACT AS A JUDGE ON THE LAST DAY

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**John 12:48:** The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.

Here Jesus words are personified as a person who will judge people in the last days. No one believes words are people yet Jesus personifies them as a judge that will judge those who reject him.

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### YOU KNOW HIM, THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH FOR HE DWELLS IN YOU

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**John 14:17:** The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you (John 14:17).

Here Jesus begins by saying the world cannot receive the Spirit of truth because they cannot see him. Though the Spirit of truth is personified as a human person everyone understands that seeing the Spirit of truth in this context means perceiving and understanding truth (God's word) in the mind. Jesus also personifies the word of God (the truth) as a person that lives in a believer this is because Jesus himself is "The way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

Added to this when a man or woman deeply loves someone the presence of the one, they love becomes a spiritual reality of that person in their heart and mind. Should anyone think this is not true consider the following, when a girl or boy fall in love for the first time there are very few moments in the day when the man or woman they love is not on their mind and in their heart and in their thoughts.

This is why Jesus can say:

- You know the Spirit of truth, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

Jesus dwells in those who love the truth and are faithful to him by love, it is by love that Christ dwells in a faithful brother or sister in Christ and if Christ is spiritually dwelling in the heart and mind of a believer then it is perfectly right and proper to personify the Spirit of truth as a person since the truth concerning God and eternal salvation is in Christ and the words he spoke so whoever has Christ spiritually dwelling within by love has eternal life.

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### WHEN THE HELPER COMES, HE WILL BEAR WITNESS ABOUT CHRIST

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- **John 15:26:** When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.

Jesus personifies the Spirit of truth as a person who will help and comfort others and who will testify that Christ is who he claimed to be. The Spirit of truth comes to a person's mind through reading the Bible and understanding the message of the cross and the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. As a person's mind perceives the eternal spiritual message and God's grace in Christ they are comforted by their understanding and belief in God's eternal promise and message of eternal salvation by faith and grace because by this understanding they come to know the glorious truth that in Christ they have been set free from striving to attain to righteousness the leads to eternal life by works of the law, self-effort or by strictly adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days or by legalistically keeping religious customs and traditions. Having Christ's words dwelling in you is the same as saying, "Christ dwells in you."

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## **CONCLUSION**

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This principle of personification applies to God's word, the Holy Spirit and also to Satan. The Bible speaks of all three as persons because each carries the character of personality. It is the common expression of the Greek language to personify words (especially when they are an attribute of human character) and speak of these words as persons. Though the words are personified it is never the intention of the Greek style of writing that a reader would embrace the personified word to mean a literal person.

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