

Hebrews 1:8

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But about the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. (NIV)

Both from the immediate context and with the presence of translation problems, there are quite a few reasons why we do not believe that this verse is not calling Jesus “God” nor should it be translated, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.”

1. First, evidence that the psalm is speaking of a human king is in [Psalm 45:7](#), which says, “You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of exultation above your peers.” That the text calls God, “your God,” i.e., the king’s God, shows that the king is inferior to God. “God” does not have a God. It would make no sense to be calling the king “God” here, as the clear biblical teaching is that there is one God ([1 Cor. 8:6](#); [John 5:44](#); [17:3](#)), so if Jesus is the one true God, how could he have a God?

2. The context of both [Hebrews 1](#) and [Psalm 45](#) makes it clear that this king being referred to is not the supreme God because this king has been blessed by God ([Psa. 45:2](#)), has a wife ([Psa. 45:9](#)), and simply put, he is a human king ([Psa. 45:1, 5, 13, 15](#)), not the supreme God. We also know this passage in [Psalm 45](#) is not originally about Jesus because the king has a wife. The queen is said to be a woman of foreign descent, possibly from Tyre ([Ps. 45:12](#)) who was told to forget her own people and father’s house ([Ps. 45:10](#)), and she and her husband have an ivory house ([Ps. 45:8](#)). Those facts have led some commentators to suggest that this psalm is referring to the marriage of the Phoenician princess Jezebel to King Ahab, who had an ivory palace ([1 Kings 22:39](#)). But that is untenable since Ahab does not fit the characteristics of a godly king that are so prominent in the psalm. Solomon, who also married foreign women and lived in luxury, is a much more likely candidate.

Thus, the original quote in [Psalm 45:6](#) is not actually referring to Jesus, but originally refers to an Old Testament king, but also finds later application in Jesus. If the verse is calling the king “God,” then that would make both Solomon and Jesus God, which is untenable, and there is no internal reason to apply [Psalm 45:6](#) to the Messiah without verse 7 applying to the same king. That would be eisegesis, reading into the verse to make it fit one’s theology. If the psalm is calling the Messiah “God,” then the Davidic king is also God. So, if a Trinitarian is using this verse to prove Jesus is God, it actually would prove too much and make Solomon God too.

Likewise, [Hebrews 1](#) makes it clear that the king (Jesus) being referred to is not God because the entire passage is trying to argue that Jesus is greater than the angels. If Jesus was God, it would have been much simpler for the author to say that Jesus is God, therefore, he is greater than the angels, case closed. Instead the author goes to great lengths to try to show Jesus’ superiority in other ways, such as that he sits at the right hand of the Father ([Heb. 1:13](#)), that God calls him his Son ([Heb. 1:5](#)), and that the angels are to worship him ([Heb. 1:6](#)).

3. The king’s God “anointed” him, setting him above his “peers.” This is evidence against a Trinitarian interpretation of the verse for a number of reasons. One is that “God” does not have any peers to be set above, whereas the human king of Israel, including the Messiah, does have peers. The Messiah, Jesus Christ, did have peers because he was completely human and not a God-man as Trinitarian theology asserts. Also, [Psalm 45:7](#) says this king loved righteousness and hated wickedness, and “therefore” God anointed him. This makes perfect sense if the king is human, but if this king is “God,” was he really anointed because he loved righteousness? It makes no sense that “God” needed to be anointed at all.

Translation Considerations:

Now let us address some reasons why [Hebrews 1:8](#) should not be translated, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.” Although “Your throne, O god, is forever and

ever” is a legitimate translation of [Hebrews 1:8](#), there is evidence that “Your throne is God forever and ever” is actually a better translation.

The renowned Greek scholar and Trinitarian, A. T. Robertson noted that the Greek word *theos* (God) could be understood as a vocative, “O God,” or as a nominative, as in the phrase, “God is thy throne” or “Thy throne is God.” He wrote: “Either [translation] makes good sense.” While it is true that from a strictly translational point of view either a vocative or nominative translation is acceptable, all translation is informed by context and scope, and the context strongly argues against the translation “Your throne, O God.”

1. There is a very good reason for believing that the correct translation of [Psalm 45:6](#) is “God is your throne,” or some other translation (some are given below) that takes “God” as referring to the Most High God and not a human “god.” If [Psalm 45:6](#) is translated, “Your throne, O God...,” then [Psalm 45:6](#) would be the only verse in the whole Bible in which a human being is directly and personally addressed as “god.” There are times when humans are referred to as “gods” ([John 10:33-34](#)) or as a god to someone else (Moses over Pharaoh in [Exod. 7:1](#)), meaning that they act as a god over that person, they rule over them; but nowhere else in the Bible is a human being personally addressed as “god.” Added to that evidence is the fact that “Elohim” occurs four times in the psalm ([Ps. 45:2](#), [6](#), and [45:7](#) (twice)), and three of them clearly refer to God, so it fits the psalm that the fourth would also refer to God the Father.

2. Robert Alter gives another argument why “O God” is likely not the correct translation. In *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary* writes “Some construe the Hebrew here to mean, ‘Your throne, O God,’ but it would be anomalous to have an address to God in the middle of the poem because the entire psalm is directed to the king or to his bride.”

3. Another argument for the translation, “Your throne is God forever and ever,” is that it matches the parallelism in the Greek between [Hebrews 1:8a](#) and [1:8b](#). In

[Hebrews 1:8b](#) we have two nominative nouns and in English we add an “is” in between. This looks like: “the scepter (nominative noun) of uprightness is the scepter (nominative noun) of your kingdom.” It is very common in both Greek and Hebrew to add a “to be” verb to make a sentence understandable in English, and almost every modern translation translates [Hebrews 1:8b](#) this way. Interestingly, the first half of the verse has the same construction, a nominative noun and then another nominative noun with no verb. Thus, it is fitting to supply an “is” in between these two nouns just as most translations do in the second half of the verse. [Hebrews 1:8a](#) would read “Your throne (nominative noun) is God (nominative noun)” and 1:8b reads, “the scepter (nominative noun) of uprightness is the scepter (nominative noun) of your kingdom.” So, in other words, one would have to find a good reason to translate the two nominative nouns differently in the first half of the verse than in the second half, even though it would be most natural to understand them in the same way because they are in a very similar construction in the Greek. The meaning of the two phrases is that God is the king’s throne (or his source of authority) metaphorically, not literally, and the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of his kingdom metaphorically, not literally. In other words, this king rules with righteousness instead of a physical scepter.

The main argument against the translation “Your throne is God,” is that the phrase does not make sense to some people. But we must understand that the verse is not using “throne” as a seat, a chair, but as it is often used in the Bible, as a source of authority. In fact, if “throne” is understood to be a chair then the verse does not make sense: the “throne” is the source of authority. In essence, the verse is saying, “your source of authority is God.” For example, when David chose Solomon to be king, one of David’s top men, Benaiah said to David, “...may he [Yahweh] be with Solomon and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord king David” ([1 Kings 1:37](#)). In speaking of Solomon’s “throne” being greater than David’s, Benaiah was saying that Solomon would have more authority and dominion than David did, which came to pass. The use of “throne” referring to the authority that the throne represents also occurs in the New Testament. When the angel Gabriel appeared to

Mary, he told her she would give birth to the Messiah and he said, “the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David” ([Luke 1:32](#)). In saying that Mary’s son would have the “throne” of David, he meant the authority that the throne represented. That authority went all the way back to God’s promise to David that his “throne” would endure forever, which is why Gabriel then said, “...he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” ([Luke 1:33](#)).

“Your throne is God forever” means that God is the authority, the “throne” of the king, and the king reigns with the authority of God. This king, and by extension the Messiah, the true king of Israel, has been specially anointed by God ([Psa. 45:7](#)).

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