

## REV Bible: Psalms 45:6 Commentary

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Your throne is God forever and ever.

A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.

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**“Your throne is God forever and ever.”** This verse is quoted in [Hebrews 1:8](#). Another similar and strong possibility for the translation is “Your throne is from God,” or “Your throne is *a throne of God*.”<sup>a</sup>

“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 graced and blessed by God ([Ps. 45:2](#)). In that light, it is appropriate that this king recognizes that God is the source of his kingly authority, which is the point of [Psalm 45:9](#). [Psalm 45](#) is a royal wedding psalm for a Davidic king, perhaps even Solomon, and by extension, some of it applies to the Messiah. He is called “the king” and “Solomon” in this commentary entry for ease of understanding, but another Davidic king may be in mind (see [commentary on Ps. 45:9](#), “the queen”).

The Hebrew text of [Psalm 45:6](#) is open to a number of different interpretations and translations. Allen Ross writes: “...there are at least five plausible interpretations.”<sup>b</sup> Given the possible translations, we may never be able to say, “This is the single correct interpretation,” but we can give evidence for what seems to be the most viable translation and interpretation.

To understand [Psalm 45:6](#), we must first learn some facts about it. For example, the speaker is the psalmist, not God. The psalmist speaks about God in the third person, for example, “God has blessed you forever” ([Ps. 45:2](#)), and “God has anointed you” ([Ps. 45:7](#)). Some people think God is the speaker, but the text argues against that. Also, the psalm is a “dual prophecy” psalm. The subject of the psalm is the king of Israel, both the Davidic king who reigns on David’s throne (likely Solomon), who marries and has children (see [commentary on Ps. 45:9](#)), and also the Messiah, the “greater David” who will eventually inherit the throne forever. Thus, some verses in the psalm more clearly point to the Messiah while others more clearly point to the Davidic king, such as the ones about him having a queen, being married, and having sons.

Scriptures that have dual fulfillments occur in a number of places in the Bible. For example, God’s promise to David about his throne applies most immediately to Solomon but also applies to the Messiah ([2 Sam. 7:11-14](#)). Isaiah gave a prophecy that was fulfilled in the time of Ahaz but also applied to the Messiah ([Isa. 7:14](#)). [Hosea 11:1](#) applied both to Israel and Jesus.

Trinitarians generally claim that [Psalm 45:6](#) (and [Heb. 1:8](#) where it is quoted) is one of the stronger verses in the Bible showing that Jesus is God, but the evidence does not support their claim. However, since many English versions translate the verse in a way that supports Trinitarian doctrine, it is fitting to address that idea first. It is worth pointing out that [Psalm](#)

[45](#) was God’s revelation to the Jews to inform them about their king, and the Jews read the Psalm for centuries and knew it was ultimately about their Messiah, but never concluded that the Messiah was “God in the flesh” or part of a Triune God. That the Jews knew that [Psalm 45](#) ultimately referred to their Messiah is preserved in their writing. For example, the Targum (an Aramaic commentary on the Old Testament) interprets [Psalm 45:2](#) as, “Thy beauty, O king Messiah, is greater than that of the sons of men.”<sup>c</sup> So if God gave the revelation to His people to tell them the Messiah would be God, His effort was an epic failure, and that is good evidence that the psalm is not saying the Messiah was God in the flesh.

Most Trinitarians say that God is the speaker in [Psalm 45:6](#), and the verse should be translated as, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.” In doing that they assert that God (assumed to be the Father) is addressing the Messiah and referring to him as “God” (assumed to be “God the Son”). But that interpretation does not fit the theology of the Old Testament or the Bible as a whole, and it does not fit the internal evidence in the psalm itself.

As we saw above, the speaker of the psalm is not God, but the psalmist. So this verse is not “God the Father” speaking to “God the Son.” Also, the Old Testament says in many places the Messiah would be a man, the servant of God (cp. the “servant songs” in Isaiah), and there are a number of statements in [Psalm 45](#) that show that the king in the psalm is not God, but is a human being. For example, [Psalm 45:2](#) says, “You are the most beautiful of the sons of men,” thus identifying him as a human by using the common idiom for a human, “son of man,” and then going on to say, “God has blessed you forever.” In saying that this “son of man” (human being) has been blessed by God, the psalm gives even more evidence that the king being referred to is not God. There is no evidence in Scripture for God being blessed by God, and there does not seem to be a reason or need for that, but humans do need to be blessed by God and are often so blessed in Scripture.

Furthermore, since [Psalm 45](#) contains dual prophecies (as we saw above), and [Psalm 45:6-7](#) apply both to Solomon and the Messiah, if the verse is calling the king “God,” then that would make both Solomon and the Messiah 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. Robert Alter translates [Psalm 45:7](#) as “Your throne of God is forevermore,” and he writes in the commentary, “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 the king or to his bride.”<sup>d</sup>

More 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.

Furthermore, 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 (and if the Second Person of the Trinity needed to be anointed, would not all three Persons need to be anointed?) and neither does it make sense that God was anointed because he “loved righteousness.” Since by definition God is righteous and loves righteousness, it makes no sense to say God was anointed because He loved righteousness. In summary, [Psalm 45](#) is not God speaking to God. It is the psalmist speaking, and the subject is a human king.

Although Biblical Unitarians do not accept the Trinitarian translation or explanation of [Psalm 45](#), many Biblical Unitarians accept a translation of [Psalm 45:6](#) that is very similar to the common Trinitarian translation. However, they recognize that “Elohim” (“God” or “god”) can refer to a human being, and in this case, they apply it to a human king and human Messiah. A common Biblical Unitarian translation is: “Your throne, O god, is forever and ever.”

Biblical Unitarians acknowledge that the speaker is not God, but many assert that in the psalm the Messiah is being addressed as “god.” While the translation, “Your throne, O god, is forever and ever” is certainly grammatically viable, nevertheless, there is evidence that it is not the way the author meant the text to be understood. It is, however, legitimate to refer to the Messiah as a “god” when it is understood that other human representatives of God are also called “god” in the Bible. A strong argument against the translation “Your throne, O god, is forever and ever,” is the fact that although divine beings and even human representatives were sometimes referred to as gods, at no time in the Old Testament (and arguably the NT as well, see [commentary on John 20:28](#)) is any given being actually directly addressed as “god.” In that sense, then, [Psalm 45:6](#) would be unique and seemingly unlikely.

The English language makes a clear distinction between “God” and “god” by the use of uppercase and lowercase letters (using the capital “G” and the small “g”). However, Hebrew and Aramaic cannot make the distinction between “God” and “god” because they only have capital letters, no lowercase letters. Thus, in Hebrew and Aramaic, every word is spelled in all capital letters, for example, “GOD.” Furthermore, although the Greek language has both uppercase and lowercase letters, the early Greek manuscripts were all written in uppercase letters, so all the ancient Greek manuscripts read “GOD” just as the Hebrew and Aramaic manuscripts did.

Also, the biblical languages, including Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin, used the word “GOD” with a much broader meaning than we do today. In the ancient world, “GOD” was a descriptive title applied to a range of authorities, including God, angels, demons, pagan gods, great people, rulers, and people acting with God’s authority—all of those were referred to as “GOD.” For example, Jesus pointed out that people to whom the Word of God came were called “gods” ([John 10:34-35](#), cp. [2 Cor. 4:4](#); [Acts 12:22](#)).

The flexible use of “GOD” in the ancient texts meant that every time GOD appeared in the text, the reader had to read the context very carefully to determine what it meant. Biblical Unitarians understand that the king being addressed in [Psalm 45](#) is a human king for the reasons cited above, and so many of them opt for the translation, “Your throne, O god.”

There is, however, good evidence that the correct translation of [Psalm 45:6](#) is represented by versions such as the REV: “God is your throne forever and ever.” As Allen Ross points out in his commentary,<sup>e</sup> this is an acceptable translation of the Hebrew, and there are some solid reasons to believe that it is the interpretation that was in the mind of the author.

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 God, as Jesus said ([John 10:33-34](#)), but nowhere else in the Bible is a human being personally addressed as “god,” and then asked or told something. 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 use does too. Another reason for thinking that [Psalm 45](#) would not be calling the king “god,” is that in pagan cultures the kings were often thought of as a god, a manifestation of god, or in some way divine. But the Bible made it clear that the kings of Israel were human and were not to be seen as somehow divine but were subject to the laws of God as everyone else was (cp. [Deut. 17:14-20](#)). That is not to say that human leaders were not referred to as “Elohim,” because they were, but there is no biblical evidence they were ever directly addressed that way.

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.”

The word “throne” is often used to mean the authority of the throne and not the physical throne itself. For example, God told David via the prophet Nathan: “Your throne will be established forever” ([2 Sam. 7:16](#)) and concerning David’s son, starting with Solomon, “I [God] will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” ([2 Sam. 7:13](#)). In that kind of communication, the “throne” does not mean the physical seat, but the authority to rule. The wording is important. We might think the prophet Nathan should have said, “I [God] will establish David’s kingdom,” but the text is, “I will establish the throne of his kingdom,” with the throne standing for the kingly authority. Even when David was fleeing from Absalom and had left Jerusalem and his physical throne behind, his “throne,” his authority as king, was still intact.

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. When the text says that “Solomon sat on the throne of Yahweh as king” ([1 Chron. 29:23](#); cp. [2 Chron. 9:8](#)), it is not talking about Solomon sitting on a physical seat, but was an idiomatic way of saying that Yahweh was the true authority in the kingdom, and Solomon was exercising authority as God’s representative. Pharaoh also used the word “throne” to represent his kingly authority. When he elevated Joseph to second in command in the kingdom, he said to Joseph, “according to your word will all my people be ruled; only in the throne will I be greater than you,” meaning, “only in my authority as king will I be greater than you.”

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](#)). Also, in [Colossians 1:16](#), the word “thrones” is not literally used, but is used of spiritual beings who had some amount of kingly authority. So given the way “throne” is used in the Bible, it is easy to see that “God is your throne” is a way of saying “God is your kingly authority” or even, “God is the source of your authority as king.”

A number of translators were uncomfortable with a vocative translation, “Your throne, O god...,” and handle the text in ways that do not involve a vocative. Thus, the CEB reads, “Your divine throne is eternal” (cp. RSV, TNK). The JPS translation reads, “Thy throne given of God is for ever.” The NJB reads, “Your throne is from God.” The NEB reads, “Your throne is like God’s throne.” The text note in the NRSV reads, “Your throne is a throne of God.” Robert Alter’s translation is, “Your throne of God is forevermore,”<sup>r</sup> and Peter Craigie’s translation is, “The eternal and everlasting God has enthroned you.”<sup>g</sup>

Although some of the translations above expand the Hebrew phrase for ease of English reading, the simple Hebrew text, which has two nouns in construct with an implied “is” between them, is a fairly common Hebrew construction. For example, [Psalm 73:26](#) has [וְחֵלְקִי](#), [אֱלֹהִים](#) which is quite literally, “my portion Elohim,” which we put in English as “my portion is Elohim.” In [Psalm 45:6](#), the text reads, [כִּסֵּאֲךָ אֱלֹהִים](#), literally, “your throne God,” which is brought into English as “your throne is God,” which makes perfect sense when we realize that the “throne” is a reference to kingly authority. The Bible calls God a number of different things to import specific information about Him into the text, such as calling God “my high ridge...fortress...rock...shield...horn of salvation” and “high tower” ([Ps. 18:2](#)). So in the context of all the things that represent God such as “rock” and “high tower,” speaking to the king and referring to God as “your throne” (your source of kingly authority) is very understandable.

[Psalm 45](#) calls the king “beautiful,” “blessed,” and “mighty one,” and speaks of his splendor and majesty and of him being a mighty warrior, so it is appropriate that this mighty king would

be reminded that “God,” his God, the Most High God, was the power behind his throne. Thus, the psalmist, speaking to the king and ultimately to the Messiah, says, “Your throne [your kingly authority] is Elohim forever and ever.”

[For more information on the flexible use of the words translated “God,” such as *Elohim* and *Theos*, see [commentary on John 20:28](#). For more information on Jesus not being God, see [Appendix 10](#), “Jesus is the Son of God, Not God the Son.”]

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Frank Gaebelein, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 5.

a)

Allen P. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, vol. 2, Kregel Exegetical Library.

b)

Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, part 2, 718.

c)

Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*.

d)

Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, Kregel Exegetical Library.

e)

R. Alter, *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*.

f)

Peter Craigie, *Psalms 1-50* [WBC].

g)

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