

Does “fairer than the children of man” in Psalm 45:2 imply the virgin birth?

Since the Old Testament is fundamentally about Jesus Christ, the Messiah, people want to know what aspect of the person, work, character, or nature of Jesus Christ that various passages of the scriptures are dealing with. Psalm 45:2 is clearly speaking about the coming Messiah (Jesus Christ) and some of His characteristics.

1. What is the immediate context of the verse?

Psalm **45:1-6**

Hebrews **1:8-10**

The object in view for the Psalm is “the king”. Since the author of the Psalm is not specified, it could have been written by someone other than King David and if so, then to some degree “the king” being addressed would be the sitting king of Israel. Due to later statements regarding the king's daughters and the apparent wealth the sitting king would most likely be King David with King Solomon as another possibility. If King David is the author, which is fairly likely, then the king in question is undoubtedly the rightful King of Israel, the Messiah Jesus. Even if the author is not King David, ultimately the King that is in focus is “Messiah Jesus”. This is specifically identified as being “the Son” (Jesus) in the book of Hebrews.

Furthermore, “the king” is the “mighty” one (v3) and rules with true righteousness (v4, 7). This King truly is the Lord Jesus Christ. The daughters of the King is a reference to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. The authority and godly character of “the king” is the ultimate and is to be understood as being on par with that of God. Thus again it is referring to Messiah Jesus.

2. What is meant by “fairer”?

Genesis **12:11**; **29:17**; 39:6

1 Samuel **16:11-13**; 17:42; 25:3

Esther 2:7

Song of Solomon 1:8

Deuteronomy 21:11

2 Samuel 13:1; 14:25

Job 42:15

Jeremiah 10:4

The Hebrew word translated as 'fairer' (yaphah) is always used as a reference to physical beauty. The NIV translation of “most excellent” does not fit the usage of the word in other passages. Statistically speaking, the word is found more in the Song of Solomon than in any other book. Song of Solomon is a book of love that definitely deals much with physical beauty.

Matthew **23:27**

Romans **10:15**

Acts 3:2

The Greek word translated as 'fairer' (oraios) in the LXX mostly carries the idea of physical beauty as well. The one possible exception is in Romans where it says “... How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel ... “. Here the “beautiful” aspect is not dealing with the physical beauty of the person bringing the Gospel message but it is dealing with a picture of glory, honor, and excellency.

3. Does the combination of the words “fairer than” make any difference?

1 Samuel **9:2**

Deuteronomy 24:7

Leviticus **7:33**

Joshua **4:4**

The Hebrew verb form of “yaphah” is in the pealal perfect form. This is a very rare form of verb that is not specifically covered in the Hebrew grammar texts except for the more advanced versions. Basically though the text could be understood as stating “You have become beautiful more than from amongst the sons of adam”. The preposition 'from' in this usage is a usage of comparison. So it is stating that given all of the people that ever existed or ever will exist, “the king” is the most physically beautiful of them all. The use of the 'from' preposition is quite common and it is generally used to identify one as being unique from among the many.

The identification of the Messiah of Israel, Jesus, as being “fairer than the children of men” is not a statement that can readily be associated with the virgin birth. It is more of a statement of the uniqueness and superiority of the Messiah. He is the best example of what men ought to be.