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Wednesday, August 27, 1997

Subject: Seeming omission in Psalm 8:5

Dear Dr. Ryrie: I notice that Psalm 8:5 says "a little lower than the angels." The Strongs reference to that indicates that it should say "elohim"--God. And in Hebrews 2:7, the word written for "angels" actually means "angels." Why is this omission in Psalm 8:5 present in the KJV? --Mike B.

Dear Mike: Your observations are quite correct. In Psalm 8, the Hebrew word is "elohim," which almost always refers to the true God but can also refer to pagan gods (Gen. 31:30), men (Ps. 82:6), judges (Exod. 21:6), and possibly angels in Psalm 8. The word inherently means "strong one," "mighty leader," which allows it to be used to refer to other than the true God. To translate "God" or "angels" in Psalm 8 makes sense either way, for humans are lower than God and lower than angels. The KJV uses "angels" while the NASB uses "God." The Greek translation of the Old Testament done around 250 B.C. translates it "angels," and the writer of Hebrews uses that translation. This is not the only instance where a New Testament writer chooses to quote that Greek translation. Our understanding of inspiration allows a biblical writer to do this, but we as interpreters cannot.

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