

# Ezra 5:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And thus they returned us answer, saying, We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and build the house that was builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded and set up.

## Analysis

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The Jewish elders' response begins with bold theological confession: "We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth." The Aramaic title *elah shemaya ve'ar'a* (God of heaven and earth) asserts Yahweh's universal sovereignty over all creation—not merely a local deity but the cosmic Creator. This confession before Persian officials paralleled Daniel's testimony in Babylon, maintaining covenant identity under foreign rule.

Their reference to Solomon ("a great king of Israel") connected the current project to Israel's glorious past. The original temple "builded these many years ago" stood approximately 400 years before its destruction, representing the pinnacle of Israel's architectural and spiritual achievement. By invoking Solomon's legacy, the elders established continuity between their restoration work and divinely authorized worship.

## Historical Context

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Solomon completed the first temple around 966 BC; it was destroyed in 586 BC—approximately 380 years of continuous service. The elders' appeal to this ancient heritage strategically emphasized that Jerusalem's temple predated the Persian Empire itself. Their response demonstrated diplomatic wisdom: acknowledging

Persian authority while asserting their project's ancient, legitimate origins under God's authorization.

## Related Passages

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**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## Study Questions

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1. How does the elders' bold confession—"We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth"—model faithful witness before secular authorities?
2. Why is connecting current ministry to its historical and biblical roots important for establishing legitimacy and continuity?

## Interlinear Text

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עֲבָדֵינוּ הֵם וְאֵנִי חֹנָא לְמַמְרָה תִּיב וְנָא פִתְגְּמָא וְכֵן מָא  
And thus us answer they returned saying We are the servants  
H3660 H6600 H8421 H560 H586 H1994 H5649

הָא אֲדִי בֵּיתָא בְּנֵי הִיא וְאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁמֶי אֱלֹהֵי דִּי  
of the God of heaven and earth and build the house that was  
H1768 H426 H8065 H772 H1124 H1005 H1768 H1934

לְיִשְׂרָאֵל וְיָמֵי לָךְ שְׁגִיָּא שְׁנֵי יָדְנָה מְקֻדָּמָת בְּנֵי הִיא  
and build ago these years many king of Israel  
H1124 H6928 H1836 H8140 H7690 H4430 H3479

וְשִׁכְלָלָהּ: בְּנֵי הִיא רַב  
and set up and build which a great  
H7229 H1124 H3635