

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

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

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

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

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

עֲבָדָה	וְ	אָנָּחָנוּ	לִמְמָתָּר	רְבִתִּיבָּן	וְ	פָּתַגְתָּמָתָּא	וְ	וְ	מִתְּמָמָתָּא
And thus	us answer	they returned	saying	We	are	the servants			
H3660	H6600	H8421	H560	H586	H1994	H5649			
לְדִי	אֵלֶּה	אֵלֶּה	שָׁמְמִי	בְּנֵי	בְּיִמְאָה	לְדִי	בְּנֵי	אֵלֶּה	שָׁמְמִי
H1768	of the God	of heaven	and earth	and build	the house	H1768	that was		
	H426	H8065	H772	H1124	H1005		H1934		
לִישְׁבָּאֵל	וְ	לְרִבְגָּדָם	תְּבִנָּה	שָׁבֵן	שְׁגִיאָה	וְ	לְבִנְיָה	וְ	לְבִנְיָה
and build	ago	these	years	many	king	and	the	and	the
H1124	H6928	H1836	H8140	H7690	H4430		H3479		
וְ	בְּ	וְ	בְּ	וְ	בְּ	וְ	בְּ	וְ	וְ
which a great	and build	and set up							
H7229	H1124	H3635							