

Daniel 2:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation.

Analysis

The Chaldeans' response in 'Syriack' (Aramaic) marks a literary shift—Daniel 2:4b-7:28 is written in Aramaic rather than Hebrew. This language change signals focus on Gentile kingdoms and God's sovereignty over world empires. The formal address 'O king, live forever' was standard court protocol (cf. 1 Kings 1:31; Nehemiah 2:3). 'Tell thy servants the dream' assumes normal procedure: the king recounts his dream, and interpreters provide meaning. This reasonable request sets up the coming impossible demand that will expose pagan wisdom's bankruptcy.

Historical Context

Aramaic served as the lingua franca of the ancient Near East, used for international diplomacy and commerce. Its use here reflects historical authenticity—Babylonian court officials would have addressed the king in Aramaic for formal proceedings. The Chaldeans were an elite priestly caste specializing in astronomy, mathematics, and divination, not just ethnic Chaldeans from southern Mesopotamia. Their professional confidence will soon be shattered.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What does the language shift to Aramaic suggest about God's message extending beyond Israel to encompass all nations?
2. How does the Chaldeans' confident request to hear the dream reveal their dependence on human interpretive systems rather than divine revelation?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּדְבֹּר ו	הַכְּשָׁדִים	לִמֶּלֶךְ	אֲבָמִית	מֶלֶכָּא	לְעֶלְמָא	יֵי
Then spake	the Chaldeans	to the king	in Syriack	O king	for ever	live
H1696	H3778	H4428	H762	H4430	H5957	H2418
אָמַר	הַדְּרֵם	לְעַבְדֵי יָךְ	וּפְשָׁךְ א	נְחַמָּה:		
tell	the dream	thy servants	the interpretation	and we will shew		
H560	H2493	H5649	H6591	H2324		

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 5:10 (Kingdom): Now the queen, by reason of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banquet house: and the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed:

Daniel 3:9 (Kingdom): They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever.

Ezra 4:7 (Kingdom): And in the days of Artaxerxes wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions, unto Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the writing of the letter was written in the Syrian tongue, and interpreted in the Syrian tongue.

Isaiah 36:11 (Parallel theme): Then said Eliakim and Shebna and Joah unto Rabshakeh, Speak, I pray thee, unto thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and speak not to us in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall.

1 Kings 1:31 (Kingdom): Then Bath-sheba bowed with her face to the earth, and did reverence to the king, and said, Let my lord king David live for ever.

Daniel 6:21 (Kingdom): Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever.

Daniel 6:6 (Kingdom): Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever.

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