

# Daniel 3:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever.

## Analysis

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The formulaic greeting "O king, live for ever" was standard ancient Near Eastern royal address, expressing wishes for the monarch's immortality and eternal reign. The Aramaic malka le-almin cheyi (מלְכָא לְעַלְמִין חֵי) literally means "O king, to ages live." While conventional courtesy, the phrase carries irony here: these accusers address a mortal king with quasi-divine honors while denouncing men who reserve worship for the eternal God who truly lives forever.

This formal greeting establishes the accusers' rhetorical strategy: demonstrate loyalty to the king before accusing others of disloyalty. By opening with elaborate deference, they position themselves as faithful servants exposing traitors. This manipulative technique flatters the king while framing their denunciation as patriotic duty rather than personal malice. They present the Jews' worship of Yahweh as political rebellion against royal authority.

The contrast is striking: these men wish perpetual life for a mere human while preparing to kill servants of the living God. Their words expose the absurdity of idolatry—ascripting divine attributes to mortals while persecuting true divine worship. This pattern recurs when political leaders receive flattery while condemning righteousness (Acts 12:21-23). Christ, the true eternal King, received mockery rather than such honors (Matthew 27:29), yet He genuinely lives forever and grants eternal life to believers (John 11:25-26).

## Historical Context

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Royal court protocol in ancient Near Eastern empires included elaborate formulas of address emphasizing the king's power and longevity. These conventional greetings served both social and political functions: demonstrating proper deference, maintaining hierarchical order, and expressing subjects' dependence on royal favor. Failure to use appropriate honorifics could itself constitute offense.

The wish for perpetual reign reflected ancient Near Eastern royal ideology where kings were considered divine or semi-divine. Mesopotamian kings claimed extended lifespans and divine right to rule. The formulaic nature of such greetings made them essentially meaningless—automatic courtesy rather than sincere wish—yet refusal to use them signaled dangerous disrespect.

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

## Study Questions

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1. How does the accusers' flattery before denunciation illustrate the manipulative use of conventional courtesy to advance malicious purposes?
2. What irony exists in wishing eternal life for a mortal king while persecuting servants of the eternal God?
3. How should recognizing Christ as the true eternal King affect our response to earthly authorities who demand ultimate allegiance?

## Interlinear Text

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חָיָה לְעוֹלָמִים יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ אָמֵן לְנָבֻכָּדְנָצָר וְאַמְּרֵה יְהוָה עָנוֹת  
They spoke and said Nebuchadnezzar O king O king for ever live  
H6032 H560 H5020 H4430 H4430 H5957 H2418

## Additional Cross-References

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

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

**Daniel 2:4** (Kingdom): 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.

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