

THANKSGIVING IN THE WILDERNESS (4)

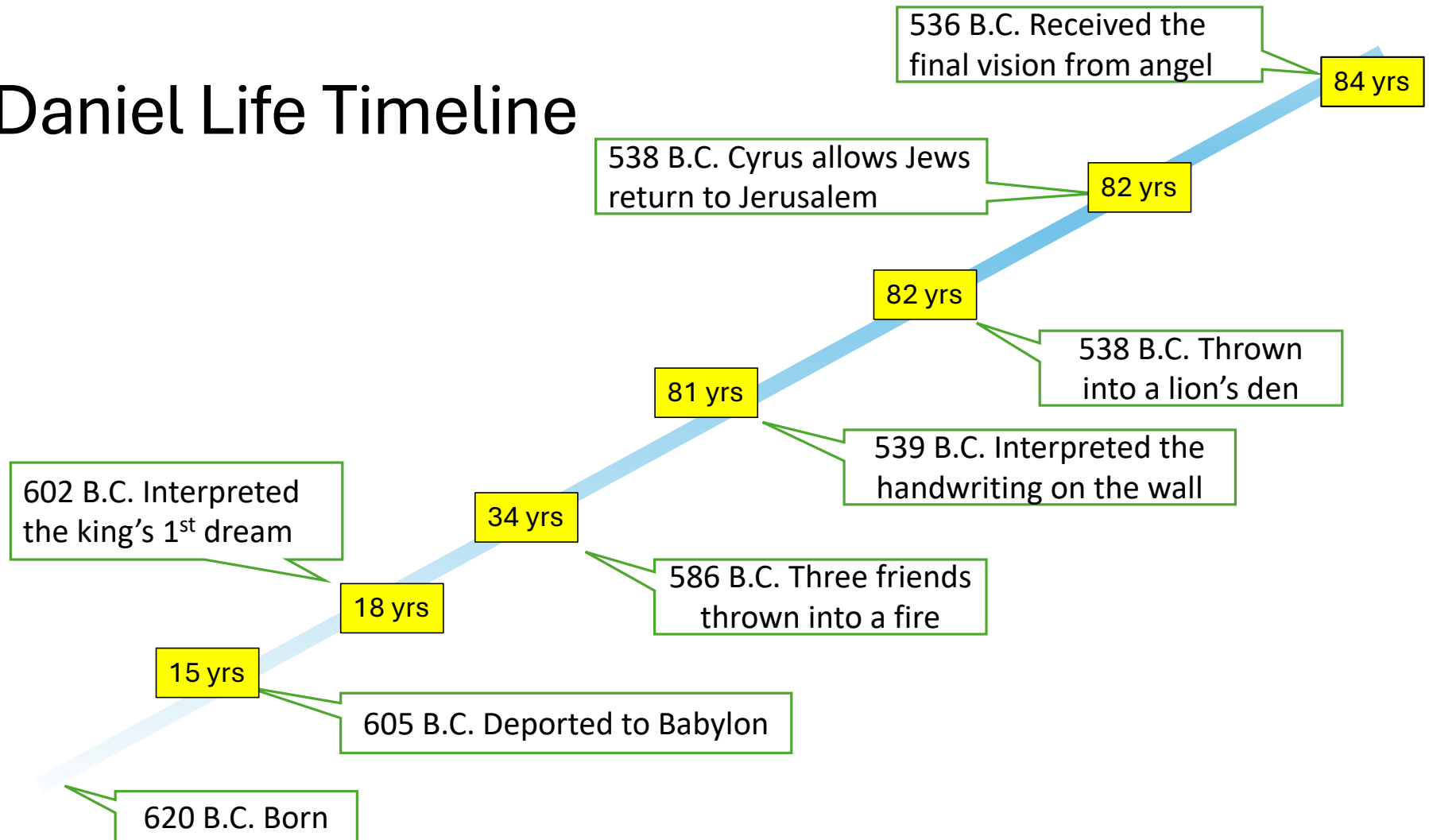
FINDING GRATITUDE WHEN LIFE IS HARD



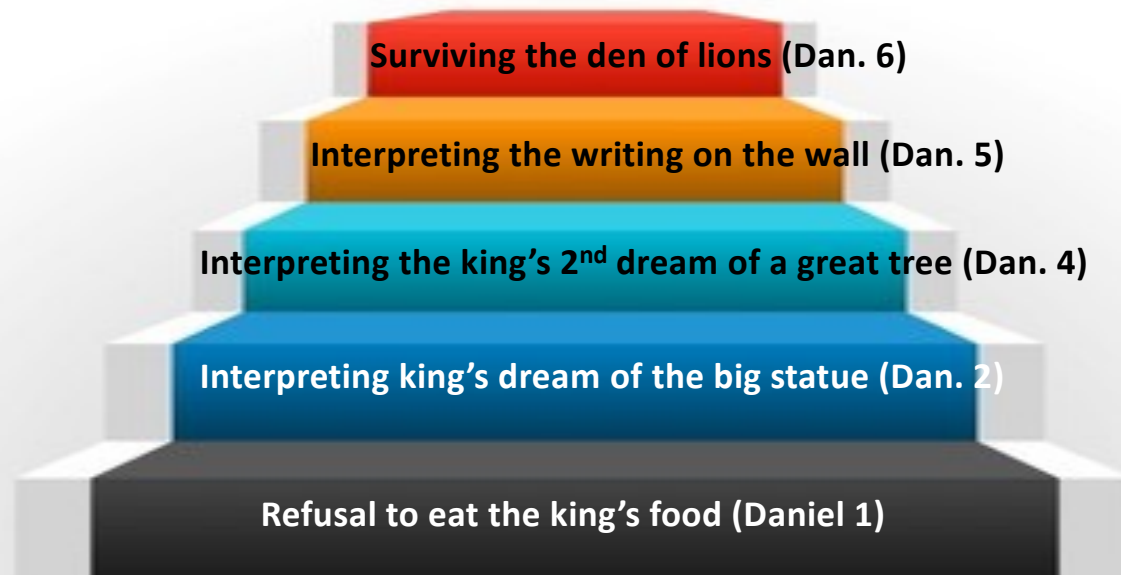
Who is Daniel?

- A Judean noble who was taken captive to Babylon in 605 B.C.
 - In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it... Then the king ordered Ashpenaz to bring some of the Israelites from the royal family, young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning (Daniel 1: 1-4).
- He and his friends were trained in Babylonian culture and language but remained committed to their Jewish faith.
 - The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego (Daniel 1:7).
- God blessed Daniel with wisdom and the ability to interpret dreams.
 - He served multiple kings, including Nebuchadnezzar and Darius, as a high official and advisor.
 - He was known for his integrity and faithfulness, which contrasted with the pagan environment around him.
 - His colleagues became jealous of his success and plotted against him, leading to his being thrown into a den of lions for refusing to stop praying to God, but he was miraculously saved.

Daniel Life Timeline



Daniel Passed Five Great Tests



The book of Daniel is a series of faith tests leading blessings! Here are five major challenges he passed.

Daniel Passed Five Great Tests

1 st Test	Refusal to eat the king's food (Daniel 1)	They looked healthier & better nourished. God gave the knowledge, skill, vision & dreams
2 nd Test	Interpreting king's dream of the huge statue (Dan. 2)	Promoted to a position of authority: ruler the whole province of Babylon/Chief Prefect over all the wise men
3 rd Test	Interpreting the king's 2 nd dream of a great tree (Dan. 4)	Faithfully in delivering the warning led to the King's eventual restoration and humble praise of God.
4 th Test	Interpreting the writing on the wall (Dan. 5)	Elevated to a position of extraordinary honor: one of three high officials set over the 120 satraps
5 th Test	Surviving the den of lions (Dan. 6)	King Darius issued a decree to all people, commanding them to tremble and fear before the God

Daniel's Greatest Difficulty

- Daniel 6 background
 - In 539 BC, the Medo-Persian coalition, led by Cyrus the Great, conquered the Babylonian Empire. Then Darius succeeded the kingdom.
 - King Darius set up a new system of 120 satraps (governors) and three chief administrators to govern the vast empire.
- Daniel's was facing an unjust death sentence in the lion's den
 - Daniel was chosen as one of the three administrators over the satraps.
 - Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom (Daniel 6:3).
 - His excellent spirit and integrity distinguished him, leading Darius to plan to place him over the entire kingdom, a decision that caused envy among the others. The jealous officials conspired to find a fault with him but could find no corruption in him.
 - At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent (Daniel 6:4).

Thanks God When Life is Difficult

- Daniel facing a decree that made it illegal to pray to anyone but the king
 - The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that **anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days**, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions' den (Daniel 6:7).
- Even when life is hard, it is possible to pray and be thankful
 - Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, **giving thanks to his God**, just as he had done before (Daniel 6:10).
 - Daniel chose to continue his custom of praying three times a day, getting on his knees and giving thanks to his God.
- Three characteristics of thanksgiving based on Daniel's case
 - Thanksgiving is a positional sacrifice;
 - Thanksgiving is a choice; and
 - Thanksgiving is a lifestyle.

Thanksgiving is a Positional Sacrifice

- Gratitude in a hostile land
 - He went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem (Daniel 6:10a)
 - May your eyes be open toward this temple night and day...so that you will hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place (1 Kings 8:29).
 - For the Jewish people in exile, praying in that direction was a way to maintain a spiritual connection to God and their homeland.
- Daniel's prayer was a positional act of faith
 - The open windows signified a continued, public, and unwavering devotion to God, even in the face of danger and defiance of the king's law.
 - His faithfulness landed him in the lion's den. Authentic gratitude often requires sacrifice, whether that's enduring criticism, facing persecution, or prioritizing God over personal comfort.
- Thanksgiving is a positional sacrifice
 - How and where we make our gratitude visible. Are we boldly positioning ourselves to reflect our faith, or do we hide it away out of convenience or fear?

Thanksgiving is a Choice

- It is a conscious, deliberate choice
 - Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed (Daniel 6:10b).
 - Thanksgiving is a choice, rooted in faith, and is not dependent on one's feelings or current situation.
 - This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now **choose life**, so that you and your children may live (Deuteronomy 30:19).
- It is a perspective shift
 - His choice to give thanks instead of complaining, even when a trap was set for him, suggests that thankfulness helps shift focus from problems to God's goodness.
 - About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them (Acts 16:25).
 - Maintain thankfulness even in hardship, focusing on God's character. God will deliver you as He has promised.

Thanksgiving is a Lifestyle

- Maintain a thankful mindset through all circumstances
 - Giving thanks to his God, just **as he had done before** (Daniel 6:10c).
- It is a lifestyle
 - Thanksgiving transcends the mere act of expressing gratitude; it is a lifestyle that reflects a heart attuned to God's grace and sovereignty.
 - It is a holistic living that permeates worship, prayer, daily actions, and community life. It is a continual acknowledgment of God's presence and provision, shaping the believer's heart and mind to reflect His glory.
- Thanksgiving in worship and prayer
 - Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with **thanksgiving**, present your requests to God (Philippians 4:6).
- Thanksgiving in daily life
 - And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, **giving thanks to God** the Father through him (Colossians 3:17).