

# What's Behind the Headlines

by Denis Lyle

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*Daniel's prayer is a powerful example of how to seek the face of God with a resolute purpose, and how to experience the effectiveness of prayer in our lives.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 66:2, Daniel 10:1, Matthew 23:12, Luke 11:1, Ephesians 6:12, James 5:16

**Topics:** "Spiritual Warfare", "Demonic Influence"

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## Description

Denis Lyle preaches on the unseen spiritual forces at work behind the struggles and conflicts in human history, emphasizing the evil nature of man and the influence of demonic forces through human leaders. The sermon delves into the prophecy of Daniel, revealing the ongoing battle between good and evil, and the continuous efforts to thwart God's purposes. Daniel's fervent prayer life and dedication to seeking God's face despite his age and circumstances serve as a powerful example of effective intercession and humility before God.

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## Transcript

### WHAT'S BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Daniel 10:1-21

According to the Canadian Army Journal a conscientious study of history has revealed the following fantastic figures concerning man's evil warlike nature. Since the world cast out the "Prince of Peace", the Lord Jesus, by crucifying Him 2000 years ago, there has not been one year without a war. In fact in the last 500 years England has engaged in 78 wars: France 71 wars: the Netherlands 23: Spain, 64: Australia, 52: Germany, 23: Italy, 25: China, 11: Denmark, 20: Sweden, 26: Poland, 30: Russia, 61: Turkey, 43: and Japan 9. Even America in its short history has engaged in 13 wars. And so "man's inhumanity to man", continues. How can we explain the fact that seemingly peaceful nations and intelligent people have been consistently driven to violence and collective war almost since time began Well, the answer is found in this 10th chapter of the prophecy of Daniel.

For in addition to the fact that man has an evil nature, there are demonic forces that are constantly active, working through leaders of human governments. The results are observable in the records of the past and the events of the present. H.C. Leupold in his exposition of Daniel states, "We get a rare glimpse behind the scene of world history. There are spiritual forces at work that are far in excess of what men who disregard revelation would suppose. They struggle behind the struggles that are written on the pages of

history". People wonder why it is that peace on earth is such an impossible goal. There are persons of good will, persons in power, who long for peace. But all the world has is war and rumour of war. One reason is that Satan hates the human race.

He hates mankind because man was made in the image and likeness of God. He will never allow the human race to achieve peace on any terms but his own: all must crown his man king, all must bow and worship the dragon, the beast, and the image of the beast.

It is toward this end that the devil works. So the crucial question is this, "Whats behind the headlines" Whether we are perplexed by the struggle between the Arabs and the Jews, or the rise and fall of dictators, the Bible reveals what is behind the headlines. Indeed the teaching of (Ch 10) is that behind the affairs and activities of nations on earth there are unseen powers: an unseen network of demons influencing the events of human history. Just as there was a demon assigned to Persia (10:13) there was another assigned to Greece (9:20) (Ps 96:5) says, "All the gods of the nations are idols", and demons are behind the false gods people worship. (1 Cor 10:20) My, throughout world history demons have been active behind the scenes in an attempt to thwart the purposes of God! Now its important to notice that these last 3 chapters in the book of Daniel form a unit.

Will you note that (Ch 11) begins with the word "also", and (Ch 12) begins with the word "and." These chapters describe the last of Daniel's four visions, indeed the last recorded event in Daniel's life. Now you will remember that in (Ch 2) there is given to us a panorama of prophecy concerning the "times of the Gentiles". In (Ch 2) four great world empires are seen from Man's point of view. In (Ch 7) these same world empires are seen from Gods point of view. In (Ch 8) details are given about how Israel would fare under Medo-Persia and Greece.

In (Ch 9) God's prophetic programme for the Jews is outlined and then in (Ch 10-12) more details are given to us concerning the fate of the Jews in both the 69 weeks leading to the time of Messiah and in the 70th week, the time of Tribulation. So (Ch 10) introduces the vision, (Ch 11) gives the prophecy and (Ch 12) adds an epilogue. Now there are two things that I want to touch upon this ...! (1) THE INTRODUCTION TO A SPECIFIC REVELATION Now remember that (Ch 10... 12) form one unit and contain the last revelation received and recorded by Daniel.

The first of these three chapters contains the introduction to the new revelation. This introduction explains how Daniel received the revelation and presents some fascinating incidents related to the delivering of the new truth to Daniel. In this introduction we are told something about: (a) DANIEL'S SOVEREIGN: 1. His EARTHLY Sovereign is Indicated: Look at (10:1) Now that little phrase tells me something about Daniel's AGE: Do you recall that he was a teenager in (Ch 1) deported by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon.

He was about 17 years of age then. Well, now a full seventy years have ran their course and the Jewish captives have returned to Jerusalem in the first year of Cyrus, and we are now two years on from that. So if you reckon that Daniel was about 17 years of age when he went into captivity, and if you add 70 years to that, plus another 2, you'll come up with 89 years of age. Can you see him Can you imagine this old man wandering the streets of Babylon, that great city with it high walls, and broad river, and hanging gardens.

Daniel's home was in Babylon, but his heart was in Canaan. Can you see him wending his way home, lonely, shut up to his books, memories and prayers. But this opening phrase "in the third year of Cyrus King of Persia", (10:1) tells something about his PEOPLE: Do you recall what took place "in the first year of Cyrus King of Persia" Well, old Daniel had been praying. He had been reading Jeremiah the prophet

and he discovered that the captivity of Judah would last seventy years, and he realised that those seventy years were nearly over.

So he began to fast and pray. He asked God to fulfil His promise in allowing the Jewish people to return to their own land. Did God respond to the cry of his servant (Ezra 1:1-4) My, the decree of Cyrus ended the Babylonian captivity and the more spiritual Jews packed their bags and left for the Promised Land. Can you picture Daniel going down to see them off Embracing his friends, calling down his blessings on them all, assuring them his prayers would be with them. Now this decree was made "in the first year of Cyrus", its now two years later, the date is about 536 BC. 1. 2.

His HEAVENLY Sovereign is IMPLIED: Look at (Ezra 1:1) Now Cyrus did not know God. (Is 45:4) But God knew him. Here was the greatest king of the mightiest empire, a heathen, yet God employed this heathen for the accomplishing of His purposes, and the setting free of His people. My, what a Bible we have, and what a God we have for "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water He turneth it whithersoever He will." (Prov 21:1) This was no mere chance, or luck, or good fortune, this was a sovereign God fulfilling His Word, and accomplishing His purposes.

My, we need to learn even as we stand on the threshold of another election, that whatever the political manoeuvres of governments and leaders, God is on the throne working out His purposes through people and powers whether they know it or not. So we are told something here (a) (b) DANIEL'S SORROW: " In those days... "(10:2-3) In the Hebrew text the word "days", is added, as though to distinguish between the weeks of years in (9:24) and weeks of days in (10:2-3) Now you would have thought Daniel would have been dancing for joy.

Cyrus had proclaimed that any Jew who wanted to go back home could do so. The madness of Nebuchadnezzar, the threat of the lions den, and the visions of the Antichrist were enough challenges for a lifetime. The captivity was over. Daniel's people were free. But the old prophet, with a mind as sharp as it was when he entered Nebuchadnezzars court seventy years before, was deeply burdened. Instead of joy there is sorrow. Old Daniel is mourning. Why Because of: 1. The INDIFFERENCE from WITHIN: Surprising as it may seem, only fifty thousand people volunteered to return to Israel. (Ezra 2:64-65) Daniel must have thought that he was too old to return or that the remaining Jews needed him in Babylon, but the fact that there were still thousands of able-bodied people content to remain troubled him.

The majority were at ease in Babylon. They had been born there. Babylon was their home, and they had business interests there. They mistakenly believed that their money, donated to the cause, was a good substitute for themselves. Who cared about restoring the Temple and rebuilding the City The truth Very, very few! My, have things changed with the passing of the years Do you recall Pauls words to the church at Philippi concerning Timothy, "For I have no man like-minded who will naturally care for your state for all seek their own (interests) not the things which are Jesus Christs." (Phil 2:20) As Paul looked around in Rome he found the general run of believers to be that of self-seeking spirit which degrades the Lord Jesus to second place.

Living for time, instead of eternity. Living for this world instead of the next. Living for the temporal, instead of the spiritual! Here are saints to be taught. Who Cares Here are sheep to be shepherded. Who cares Here are sinners to be saved. Who cares Here are souls to be nurtured. Who cares "All seek their own interests". Is that you Or like Daniel do you care Daniel is mourning. Why 1. Also because of: 2. The OPPOSITION from WITHOUT: \* The Jews were facing Opposition in the PRESENT: For the news from

Jerusalem was disturbing.

The 50,000 who did go back, found a packet of trouble waiting for them. (Ezra 4:1-4) My, Satan will never suffer any attack upon his kingdom without resenting it and here we discover that when God begins to move in power the enemy strikes back. This is why Daniel was mourning. \* \* The Jews would face Opposition in the FUTURE: Did you notice that 3 times in (10:1) we read of " a thing", the thing revealed was really a series of events... events which are unfolded in the last chapters of this book.

Now look at (10:1) again. Do you see that phrase "the time appointed was long", its better translated like this "And the thing was true, even a great warfare". My, thats what this revelation is all about. Warfare! In particular warfare against the nation of Israel. So this vision Daniel received was about " great conflict", and this "great conflict", would bring great suffering to the Jews in the future! (10:14) The prophecies of (Ch 11 & 12) define these "later days", to be the history of Israel in the 70 weeks of her prophetic programme with special emphasis on her sufferings under Antiochus Epiphanes in the Intertestamental period and Antichrist in the Tribulation period.

My, do you see now why Daniel was mourning He was mourning because: \* So few chose to go back to Jerusalem: \* Of the heartaches of those who did go back: \* Of his nations future sufferings: A man who is burdened for the work of God: for the people of God: for the glory of God! Are you My, when Daniel was burdened he didn't go to a counsellor, complain to his friends, or gripe to his neighbours. Daniel went right to the source. He prayed! Do you ever mourn before God, because Gods people are so indifferent Do you ever really get down to prayer when the work is being hindered Do you really intercede when the wheels drag heavily, when the gospel chariot seems bogged down Do you ever go without "legitimate things", because you're burdened Andrew Bonar was one of the great preachers and writers of the 19th century.

His daughter was taking a Welsh evangelist through the church that her father pastored. She said, "When I was a little girl, my Daddy used to bring me here and tell me to sit in a pew in the back". He would say, "I'll be back in a little while. You stay here". "He'd leave me, and I wouldn't see him for a while. One day I decided to find out what he was doing, so I crawled out of the pew and walked up the aisle until I finally found him. I saw the strangest thing. My Dad would be seated in a pew bent forward, as if to read the name on the plaque.

He would read the name and then bow his head and pray. Then he would scoot over and read the name on the next pew and pray again. My father would spend an entire evening in the place where the people of God came to worship, and one by one, pray for every worshipper in the church fellowship. He had an overwhelming burden for his people". I wonder what would happen if we all would carry the burdens that God places on our hearts, back to the source, even as Daniel did. So we see here something about (a) (b) (c) DANIEL'S SITUATION: 1.

Look at his PERSONAL Situation: In (10:2) You see, I think two years prior to this last vision in (Ch 10) Daniel retired from being Prime Minister of the Medo-Persian Empire, for (1:21) says that "Daniel continued even unto the first year of King Cyrus". This was now the third year of Cyrus, and evidently Daniel had retired from governmental responsibilities, but not from spiritual responsibilities. For here is an old man, almost 90 years of age, who is still seeking the face of God in prayer.

My, can you see the extent that Daniel was prepared to go to indicate that he meant business with God \* He practices a partial fast: (10:3) The Hebrew words mean "bread", or "food of delight". For us that would mean staying over the "sweets", like pavlova, or binoffi. Moreover he didn't eat normal foods either for he

says, "neither came flesh or wine in his mouth." \* He uses no lotions: "Neither did I anoint myself at all". (10:3) You see, it was customary to anoint one's self with oil for protection from the sun, to keep the skin soft, and to add fragrance to the body.

My, these privations were a significant undertaking for a man nearly 90 years of age. I venture to say that there's not a believer here... who is as old as Daniel. My, have you ever been so burdened for the work of God, that you have not eat or slept, so determined you were to pray the thing through. 1. 2. Look at his GEOGRAPHICAL Situation: For (10:4) says that he was "by the side of the great river which is Hiddekel". Now that is simply the Hebrew name for the Tigris River.

There were two great rivers in this country, the Euphrates, on which the city of Babylon was built, and the Tigris, located sixty miles east of Babylon. We don't why Daniel was at the Tigris... he may have been on official business or he may have gone to encourage a group of Jewish people to return to their homeland. Some people like to get outside and walk when they are troubled. When we leave our natural environment we seem to be able to think better, to look at our problems with a different perspective.

My, can you imagine old Daniel after three weeks of prayer and fasting strolling by the river, and then all of a sudden seeing this brilliant figure. Who was this person Why had he come Well, before we answer those questions lets come from (1) to: (2) THE INTERCESSION OF A HISTORIC PROPHET Now I am deliberately referring to Daniel as an historic prophet, for one simple reason. The critic's question the historicity of Daniel. They say, "No man by the name of Daniel ever lived", they say "this book was not written when it purports to have been written, it was written some 400 years later, written after the events had already come to pass".

"Whoever did write the book", say the liberals "wrote it after the events and threw it into this prophetic form". Now why do say this Because the book of Daniel is a prophecy, God predicting ahead of time what was going to be. This is why the modernists hit this book, for they deny the supernatural. Now there is an interesting little touch in (10:1) that proves the historicity of Daniel. Did you notice it "Daniel whose name was called Belteshazaar". Now when was Daniel given this pagan Babylonian name (1:7) When he was deported from Jerusalem to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar as lad of about 17 years of age!

Do you see what Daniel is doing He is testifying that he was the same person who was carried into Babylon more than 70 years before and that he was the same person concerning whom the earlier portions of the book relate. Of course the question is settled for us by the Lord Jesus who establishes the authenticity of Daniel when he refers to him as "Daniel the prophet". (Matt 24:15) Now that Daniel was really praying here is made clear from (10:12) Can you see this old servant of God almost 90 years of age laying hold of the throne My, maybe you can no longer do the things that you used to be able to do.

No longer can you preach: visit the sick: witness in the open air but can you do what Daniel did Can you pray Can you seek the face of God for the work of God My, look at how this old warrior gets down to pray. Every part of his being was given over to this exercise! There was: (a) THE SPIRITUAL ASPECT: Look at (10:12) "Before thy God..." "So this is a spiritual thing that Daniel is doing, for it has to do with God. Of course real prayer is a spiritual thing. Just saying your prayers may be going through the ritual to ease your conscience, but real prayer in the name of Christ and through the Spirit of God is spiritual.

You see the Trinity is involved. Thats why Paul says in (Eph 2:18) "For through Him (Christ) we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father". (a) (b) THE EMOTIONAL ASPECT: For (10:12) says "Thou didst set thine heart..." "and I think we may be permitted to take that word "heart", and refer it to the seat of our

affections, the emotional side of our being. You see, here is a man praying and he feels things very keenly. I think one of the reasons Daniel was mourning, was because he was disappointed.

The Jews had opportunity to return to their home land, but most of them cared little about the Promised Land and were content to remain enmeshed in Babylonian society. No wonder Daniels heart was stirred the way it was in (10:2-3) My, do you never think the servants of God get disappointed! Disappointed when there so little appetite for the Word: Disappointed when there so little agony in prayer: Disappointed when there so little passion for the lost! You see, Daniel loves his God, he loves his people and he feels it all very keenly and his prayers are effective.

For it is "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man that availeth much". (James 5:16) D. L. Moody in commencing his first message in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London on the 9th October 1892 recalled the time when he first entered the building some 25 years previously. What impressed him most he said was not the praise, though he had never heard such congregational singing, it was Spurgeons preaching brilliant though it was. It was Spurgeons prayer. My ...C. H. Spurgeon seemed to have such access to God that he could bring down the power from heaven.

Sometimes this mighty Prince of Preachers was so powerful in his opening prayer that he would be suddenly caught up to heaven and had to his coat pulled by a deacon sitting beside him on the pulpit in order to bring him back to the assembled multitude. Do you know what it is to " set your heart" (a) (b) But notice there was: (c) THE INTELLECTUAL ASPECT: Look at (10:12) again. "Thou didst set thine heart to understand... "We are moving now from the realm of the heart (feeling) to the realm of the head (thinking) This is intellectual!

Do you recall (9:2) Here Daniel confesses that he understood by books the number of the years. In (11:2) we find the angel saying to Daniel " And now will I show thee the truth". Intellectual. Or look again at (10:1) "Understanding of the vision... " So all this praying is not only the deep feelings of a mans heart, it is the clear thinking of a mans head. His intellect at work as well as his emotions! (a) (b) (c) (d) THE VOLITIONAL ASPECT: For the angel says "Thou didst set...

"(10:12) That clearly is a word of the will for a resolute purpose is expressed here. Daniel chose to give himself to prayer, he decided that he would, and he acted on his decision! My, can you see every part of Daniel's being united for this exercise of prayer The heart, the head and now the will. Do you see the kind of prayer that prevails It should be with that deep feeling in the heart, it should be "with the understanding also", (1 Cor 14:15) but then it takes a lot of purpose or of will to pray!

Have you not felt the power of the enemy in this respect Satan relentlessly attacks our will to keep us from actually getting down to prayer, but the angel says of Daniel "Thou didst set thine heart", or "thou didst determine", have you made such a resolve Are you determined that nothing or noone should intervere with your prayer life Of Daniel it was said "thou didst set thine heart". (10:12) Of the Lord Jesus it was said, "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem". (Lk 9:51) You see, when your personal tempter seek to keep you from getting down to prayer, remember that Christ "set His face", to become your Saviour and that will give you an incentive to set your will to pray!

Do you see that Daniel is all in it There was (a) (b) (c) (d) and there was: (e) THE PHYSICAL ASPECT: For the angel says, "Thy words were heard..." (12:10) And words are a physical expression. Of course we know from (6:10) that Daniel "kneeled upon his knees", in prayer and that kneeling frame was indicative of a lowly spirit. Daniel was humbling himself before the God of heaven. The angel says, "thou didst set thine

heart to understand and to chasten thyself before thy God...

"or as another translation puts it", to humble thyself... "My, if ever there was a man of God it was Daniel. I mean his public life: his private life: his prayer life was above criticism. Think of how long and faithfully he had served the Lord in a foreign land under a succession of rulers and yet here is this man of all men chastening himself before his God, pouring out his soul in prayer and fasting! Do you long for your prayers to be effective To prevail Then you'll need to cultivate this lowliness of heart and mind before God for the slightest sign of a haughty spirit will leave the heavens as brass.

When Duncan Campbell spoke about the Revival in Lewis, on the Outer Hebrides he said this. "There came upon the people of God who were praying a chastened spirit". The Lord says "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word". (Is 66:2) The Lord Jesus said, "He that shall humble himself shall be exalted". (Matt 23:12) Like Daniel are you a man or woman of prayer No man knew C.H. Spurgeon as intimately as Archibald Brown.

He was saved through Spurgeon's ministry and later trained in his College. When Archibald Brown was Pastor of the old East London Tabernacle, his young son Douglas used to be fond of telling how every Friday night as a lad he would creep up the attic stairs, a few minutes after he had heard his Father go up there. He knew his Dad had gone up there to pour his heart out to God for the services on Sunday. And young Douglas used to sit on the stairs outside the door to listen to his father praying.

And that precious memory of his dad never left him. What way your children remember you Will they remember you as a praying father or a praying mother My, as we have looked again at the prayer life of a godly man, we need to take the words of the disciples upon our hearts and lips and say, "Lord teach us to pray". (Lk 11:1)

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