

The Ships of Tarshish go to Chittim

The ships of Tarshish that go to Chittim were literal ships, but they are used in prophesy to refer to the last great nation, government of men that is the most blasphemous of all nations before it. Their first mention is the population of the Isles by Noah's great grandsons, Tarshish and Kittim.

Genesis 10:2 ¶ The sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras. 3 And the sons of Gomer; Ashkenaz, and Riphath, and Togarmah. 4 And the sons of Javan; Elishah, and Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. 5 By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations.

Kittim is a literal place and it's location is associated with a land across or in the midst of the sea. The next time this place is mentioned is also literal.

2 Chronicles 9:21 For the king's ships went to Tarshish with the servants of Hiram: every three years once came the ships of Tarshish bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks.

The ships of Tarshish went on three year voyages, leaving the land of Israel to bring back gold, silver, copper, iron . In this passage the phrase "Ships of Tarshish" is an ancient idiom for deep sea vessel. And apes and peacocks are ancient idioms for iron and copper. It does not take three years to journey and return from any place in the Mediterranean. These ships were deep sea going vessels that ventured out into the Atlantic on three year missions to return precious metals from mining colonies on regions of land that are far out to sea. I believe they were going to the Americas.

The ships were constructed in Eziongeber. This is unusual. Most ships can be built anywhere, but these ships were so large that construction equipment was not commonly available anywhere. The ships were so large they could not be constructed without cooperation between governments.

The idiom Tarshish probably arose from the use of the city of Tarsus for their lading. Each three year mission would begin in Tarsus where they ships were outfitted and provisioned for the long journey. Jonah chose a ship of Tarshish for his attempt to escape pronouncing judgement on Nineveh. Jonah wanted to get as far away as is possible.

2 Chronicles 20:36 And he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish: and they Page 204 of 279 lawprophets2 3/3/15 10:36 AM made the ships in Eziongeber. 37 Then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the LORD hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish.

About 800BC, God stopped the ships to Tarshish. Evidently, He didn't want the old world to be connected to the new world again for another 2000 years. From this point in scripture, there are no more mentions of literal ships to Tarshish, except for Jonah. Which of course took place during that time. The prophets, however, speak of the ships of Tarshish going to Chittim a lot.

Balaam is the first prophet to speak of them. Balaam tries to curse Israel, but instead speaks the Words of God for the distant future.

Numbers 24:17 I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: 24 And ships shall come from the coast of Chittim, and shall afflict Asshur, and shall afflict Eber, and he also shall perish for ever.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel all speak of these ships and of Chittim. They describe Chittim in the end times as the greatest nation that is the marketplace of the world. Its merchandise is world renown and its government rules the world. Chittim in prophesy is described as the nation that bears the brunt of God's wrath for its insolence and scandalous and blasphemous behavior.

Isaiah 23:1 ¶ The burden of Tyre. Howl, ye ships of Tarshish; for it is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering in: from the land of Chittim it is revealed to them. 2 Be still, ye inhabitants of the isle; thou whom the merchants of Zidon, that pass over the sea, have replenished. 3 And by

great waters the seed of Sihor, the harvest of the river, is her revenue; and she is a mart of nations. 4 Be thou ashamed, O Zidon: for the sea hath spoken, even the strength of the sea, saying, I travail not, nor bring forth children, neither do I nourish up young men, nor bring up virgins.

Isaiah 23:8 ¶ Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning city, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth 9 The LORD of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth. 10 Pass through thy land as a river, O daughter of Tarshish: there is no more strength. 11 He stretched out his hand over the sea, he shook the kingdoms: the LORD hath given a commandment against the merchant city, to destroy the strong holds thereof. 12 And he said, Thou shalt no more rejoice, O thou oppressed virgin, daughter of Zidon: arise, pass over to Chittim; there also shalt thou have no rest. 14 Howl, ye ships of Tarshish: for your strength is laid waste.

Jeremiah 2:10 For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing.

Jeremiah 10:9 Silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the workman, and of the hands of the founder: blue and purple is their clothing: they are all the work of cunning men.

Ezekiel 27:25 The ships of Tarshish did sing of thee in thy market: and thou wast replenished, and made very glorious in the midst of the seas.

Ezekiel 38:13 Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?

Daniel 11:30 For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant. Even the Psalms reference the ships of Tarshish in the context of the end times and the Day of the Lord.

Psalm 48:7 Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.

Psalm 72:10 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.

Psalm 72 is interesting because it references a passage in Isaiah 23 where the land of Tarshish Chittim is described in the Millennial reign of Christ as supplying the best clothing and the best food for consumption by the saints.

Isaiah 23:15 ¶ And it shall come to pass in that day, that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king: after the end of seventy years shall Tyre sing as an harlot. 16 Take an harp, go about the city, thou harlot that hast been forgotten; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered. 17 And it shall come to pass after the end of seventy years, that the LORD will visit Tyre, and she shall turn to her hire, and shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth. 18 And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the LORD: it shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the LORD, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing.