



Christian Questions

TALK RADIO WITH A PURPOSE

You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. Jeremiah 29:13

Dear Rick,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You wanted to know what the "Ships of Tarshish" were and where they were from. You also wanted to know how they would help Israel.

Tarshish first comes into notice in the days of Solomon. The city was a symbol of size and strength, famed as a port with ships renowned as the largest of that age. Tarshish was located on the Mediterranean Sea and was usually identified with the powerful Phoenician trading colony in southwest Spain near modern Cadiz.

In the Ezekiel 38:10-13 God is speaking through the Prophet Ezekiel to Gog of Magog, a confederacy of nations from the north, who would invade a land of "unwalled villages" (Israel).

10 " 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On that day thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil scheme. 11 You will say, "I will invade a land of unwalled villages; I will attack a peaceful and unsuspecting people--all of them living without walls and without gates and bars. 12 I will plunder and loot and turn my hand against the resettled ruins and the people gathered from the nations, rich in livestock and goods, living at the center of the land." 13 Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish and all her villages will say to you, "Have you come to plunder? Have you gathered your hordes to loot, to carry off silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods and to seize much plunder?" ' "

Notice in verse 13 above that Sheba, Dedan and Tarshish do not appear to be active participants in the attack but stand to share in the spoils. "Have you come to plunder?" they ask. The question is rhetorical. It is really a statement put in question form, meaning, "You have come to plunder." In the next sentence we see how interested they are in the amount of goods seized. Sheba, Dedan and Tarshish were trading peoples and merchants; they were not warriors. In ancient times merchants from such nations waited on the victors of great battles in order to purchase what they could of the spoils for their own advantage. So the prophetic picture here is drawn to show that commercial interests are waiting to benefit from the anticipated plunder of the land.

Sheba and Dedan were two Cushite peoples - both recorded in Genesis 10 as sons of Raamah son of Cush. Both were mercantile peoples, Dedan in the north in what is now Saudi Arabia and Sheba in the extreme south and on the Red Sea coast (the Yemen). Tarshish in the Old Testament is the mysterious land to which the great trading vessels of the





Christian Questions

TALK RADIO WITH A PURPOSE

You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. Jeremiah 29:13

Phoenicians sailed, returning to Tyre with all kinds of strange and valuable goods. The expression “ships of Tarshish” occurs a number of times in the Old Testament and is seen to denote large oceangoing merchant vessels irrespective of destination. “Tarshish and all her villages” therefore can be taken as standing for the distant countries of the West, the entire West African coast, Spain and Britain. Since it is fairly certain that the Phoenicians traded with the Azores and perhaps knew the West Indies, even the New World (the Americas) might be included in the term.

The late Bible scholar, Albert O. Hudson in the first chapter of the booklet, “Jacob’s Trouble” states, “So the prophetic picture is complete. Israel, the people of God, a tiny and apparently defenseless nation at the center of the earth, is locked within an iron ring of implacable enemies arrayed against her from the farthest corners of the earth. Practically every part of the world known to the ancients of Ezekiel’s day is represented in the list, from Britain, Spain and Africa in the west to Persia and India in the east, from Turkey and Russia in the north to Arabia in the south. The whole world stands set against the land of unwalled villages. This is the picture which, expanded to take in the greater scale of events and the wider dispersion of nations today, is drawn to reveal the nature of that greater conflict which is to end the dominion of evil in the earth.”

Will the “ships of Tarshish” help Israel? No, they will not help. Instead they (most likely the western world nations, including the United States) will stand by passively as Israel is invaded. “All your allies have forgotten you; they care nothing for you.” (Jeremiah 30:14) The good news is that God will intervene for Israel. (See Jeremiah 30:16-24 and Jeremiah, Chapter 31.) He will “confound the material might of the nations by means of a power they can neither understand nor withstand.” (Hudson) In the words of the Psalmist, “Be still, and know that I am God, I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth.” (Psalm 46:10)

We hope we have answered your question. Be sure to sign up for CQ Rewind at www.christianquestions.com. The service is free and will provide you with scriptural perspective on many questions and topics.

Sincerely,

Christian Questions Radio

