

Tarshish -Britain or Spain?

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replenished, and made very glorious in the midst of the seas" (Ezek.27:25).

"Thy borders are in the midst of the seas, thy builders have perfected thy beauty. They have made all

thy **ship boards** of fir trees of Senir: they have taken cedars from Lebanon to make **masts** for thee. Of the oaks of Bashan have they made thine **oars**" (Ezek.27:4-6).

Tarshish is mentioned in the prophecies of Scripture as having an important role in the last days. Usually reference is made to "the ships of Tarshish" or the "merchants of Tarshish". If we can locate Tarshish in the ancient world we can identify Tarshish in the last-days prophecies.

Ezekiel, in 587BC described all of the commodities sold in the market place of Tyre and stated that

*"Tarshish was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of all kind of riches; with silver, iron, **tin**, and lead, they traded in thy fairs"* (Ezek.27:12).

The commodities that came from Tarshish are listed above and this gives us a clue as to where Tarshish was located. If we can identify **the source of these metals** in the ancient world (6th century BC) then we can be certain about which country is Tarshish in the last days.

Tarshish was a nation that was rich in minerals and supplied the known world in the 6th century BC through the markets at the coastal city of Tyre. Tyre was a maritime power and she built her own ships to bring merchandise to Tyre.

"The ships of Tarshish did sing of thee in thy market: and thou wast

The ships of Tarshish will suffer during the judgments of the Day of the Lord (Isa.2:16; Ps.48:7

*"For **the day of the LORD** of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low...**And upon all the ships of Tarshish**"* (Isa.2:12-16).

During the Tribulation one third of the ships will be destroyed during the 2nd Trumpet judgment (Rev.8:9) and Tarshish must therefore be a great shipping nation in the last days. If we are in the last days then this would point to the United States since they control the oceans with the greatest navy in the world.

A further clue is given in Ezekiel 38:13 where the merchants of Tarshish are said to have "young lions".

*"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?"*** (Ezek.38:13).

The **young lions, or offspring**, join with Tarshish to challenge the invasion of Israel by Russia, Iran, Turkey, Libya and Sudan in the last days. They are also associated with Sheba and Dedan whose descendants populated the Arabian Peninsula.



Most Bible maps show Tarshish somewhere on the west coast of Spain. The location in Spain is doubtful because Bible commentators have thought Tarshish was Tartessus which appears in Greek mythical writings. It is not known whether Tartessus was a city, a river or a nation. Archeological diggings have failed to produce any evidence of it in Spain.

One historical record states:

“The name Tartessus (sometimes Tartessos) **has long been surrounded by myth**. It is associated with the south west of Spain, and is likely to have been a kingdom. Nevertheless, different sources have referred to it as **a city, a mountain, even a river – the Guadalquivir**. It is said to be **buried under the Coto Doñana (the combined marshlands and dunes at the mouth of the Guadalquivir that are now protected as a National Park)**, others claim it is under **Seville... or Huelva and so on**. There is consensus that it existed somewhere in the area between Huelva, Cádiz and Seville, but who the inhabitants were we do not know.” (*Spain -Thenandnow*).

With such uncertainty surrounding Tartessus it would be dangerous to assert that Spain was the Tarshish of Scripture which was a maritime power in the days of Solomon and which was the source of minerals for the great trading city of Tyre when Ezekiel wrote in the 6th century B.C.

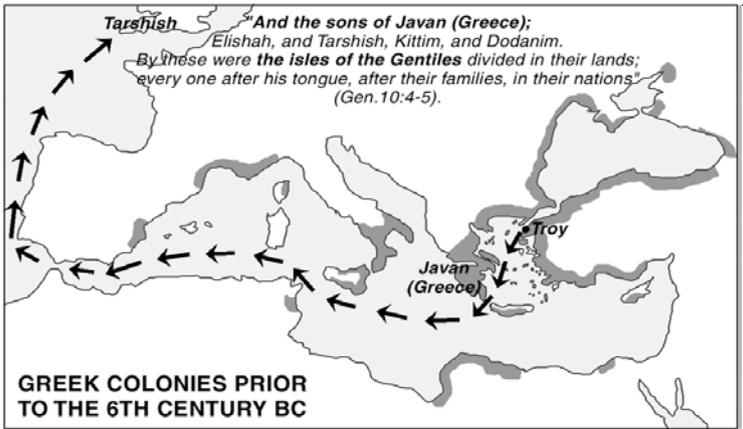
Some have pointed out that there is a mining town in Spain called Tharsis but this is a **recent** development and obviously an imported name by a British mining company. The record states:

“Coincidentally, **there is a town named Tharsis 50 kilometres north of Huelva; the “th” combination, however, is a linguistic curiosity and alien to the Spanish language**. A possible explanation is the influence of British mining concerns which owned the giant Rio Tinto Company with mines between Huelva and Tharsis in the 19th century.”

The fact that a British mining company in the 19th century called it Tharsis is more likely to point to Britain being Tarshish. **They gave it an English name!**

Reference to the minerals “*silver, iron, tin, and lead*” has been linked with Spain since extensive mining has been conducted in the mountains of south-western Spain. However, it seems that one of those metals was **not plentiful in Spain** and that metal was tin. Thus we read:

“The south western part of the Iberian Peninsula was enormously rich in minerals, and Ezekiel’s reference reflects a common



association of the metal with the western Mediterranean. (Tin came primarily from Cornwall in the British Isles, and was brought back by the Phoenicians; it was combined with copper, abundant in south west Spain, to produce bronze. The Rio Tinto mine just north of Huelva was first worked by the Phoenicians and still produces copper. It is reputed to be the oldest mine in the world.)”

It may be that the ships of Tarshish brought minerals from Spain but it is unlikely that they brought tin from Spain since its source was Cornwall on the south west of Britain. **Cornwall was the only major source of tin in Europe for the past 2,500 years.** In the 19th century there were 400 mines in Cornwall employing 18,000 people. The last mine closed in 2004. It is also true that **the mountains of Wales, just north of Cornwall** have been a source of all the minerals

listed in Ezekiel 27:12. We have already noted the historical record which **assumes** that Tartessus was in Spain and that Tarshish was Tartessus however, it also acknowledged that **tin was sourced from Cornwall** as follows:

“Tin came primarily from Cornwall in the British Isles, and was brought back by the Phoenicians; it was combined with copper, abundant in south west Spain, to produce bronze.”

Archeological research in Cornwall recently identified ancient harbour facilities along with evidence of ancient structures. The harbour was on the north side of the Cornwall Peninsula and has now silted up.

In recent years the Spanish people have shown increased interest in their roots and a comic series made reference to Tertessus:

“Probably more appealing to readers is the recent and highly successful comic series Tartessos. The first album appeared in 2005

with the title *La ruta del estaño* (**The Tin Route**). It deals with the rivalry between the **Tartessians and the evil Arkabala, the high priest of the Temple of Hercules in the Phoenician city of Gadir (Cádiz), for control of the tin route to “las islas Casitérides” (the British Isles.)** Control of this precious metal which the Tartessians combined with copper to produce bronze, allows the Tartessians to live in great comfort. The basis of the trade is a **long standing agreement between the Tartessians and the Celts from the British Isles”** (*Spain -Thenandnow*).

While this is just a comic series it is based on fact as Encyclopedia Wikipedia states:

“Britain was not unknown to the Classical world. As early as the 4th century BC, the Greeks, Phoenicians and Carthaginians traded for Cornish tin. The Greeks refer to the Cassiterides, or “tin islands”, and describe them as being situated somewhere near the west coast of Europe”.

Ancient evidence goes back to “The Histories” by Herodotus who wrote about 450BC and is known as the “Father of Ancient History”. He wrote:

“Now these are the **farthest regions of the world** in Asia and Libya. Of the

extreme tracts of Europe towards the west I cannot speak with any certainty; **for I do not allow that there is any river, to which the barbarians give the name of Eridanus, emptying itself into the northern sea, whence (as the tale goes) amber is procured; nor do I know of any islands called the Cassiterides (Tin Islands), whence the tin comes which we use.** For in the first place the name Eridanus is manifestly not a barbarian word at all, but a Greek name, invented by some poet or other; and secondly, though I have taken vast pains, **I have never been able to get an assurance from an eye-witness that there is any sea on the further side of Europe. Nevertheless, tin and amber do certainly come to us from the ends of the earth.** (Book 3, para 115).

We should note that Cassiterite is “tin dioxide” from which tin is extracted. The word comes from the Greek *kassiteros* meaning “tin”. The term “tin islands” could hardly be applied to Spain which is located



in **mainland** Europe but it would fit well with the British Isles.

Herodotus indicated that he had no evidence of the North Sea on the north of Europe. The end of the known world in his day was beyond the “Pillars of Hercules” which stand on either side of the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea from the Atlantic which was described as “the ocean”.

In his day all of Africa west of Egypt was called Libya and south of Egypt was called Ethiopia. Herodotus travelled extensively gathering historical information (and myth) from Greece, Asia, Egypt and Persia but he never travelled to the western end of the Mediterranean or beyond the pillars of Hercules hence he was dependent on reports from others who had.

Herodotus tells the story of a boat that was driven by a storm past the Pillars of Hercules and ended up in Tartessus:

“The crew, informed by Corobius of all the circumstances, left him sufficient food for a year. They themselves quitted the island; and, anxious to reach Egypt, made sail in that direction, but were carried out of their course by a gale of wind **from the east**. The storm not abating, they were driven **past the Pillars of Hercules, and at last, by some special guiding providence, reached Tartessus.**”

This indicates that Tartessus was in the Atlantic which would best apply to Britain.

The prophecies concerning Tarshish best fit Britain. Tarshish in Scripture has “young lions” or offshoot nations such as colonies. Spain colonized South America but Britain colonized the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and many more places. No other nation in history has created an empire of colonies like the British Empire. The early colonizing nations were the Phoenicians and the Greeks. The Greeks excelled with colonies in the Black Sea, Asia Minor and around the Mediterranean.



Greece was formerly known as Javan (iavan) and was settled by the descendants of Javan the son of Japheth. Javan had four sons of whom **Tarshish was the second**. Throughout history the family of Javan have been merchants, traders and colonizers.

If Spain were Tarshish then one would expect that she and her colonies would be a major maritime and military power in the last days along with her “young lions” in South America but the opposite is the case. Spain is economically weak and is only a small part of the

EU. The Spanish-speaking South American nations are also weak and still developing.

In addition, Tarshish and the young lions must be connected to **Sheba and Dedan (Arabia) in the last days**. Spain is not connected to Arabia whereas Britain and America have been the great oil-producing and oil marketing **merchants**. Oil is transacted in US dollars.

Summary

The evidence would indicate that Tarshish in ancient times was Great Britain for the following reasons:

1) There is no doubt Cornwall was the source of tin from the earliest times and that **no other location could supply the quantities used**. The Bible states that the merchants of Tarshish supplied tin to the markets of Tyre when Ezekiel wrote in 587BC.

2) It is possible that copper was mined in Spain but tin from Britain was mixed with it to make bronze. All of the minerals marketed by the merchants of Tarshish could have come from Britain but **only some of the minerals** could have come from Spain.

3) Tartessus may well have been the Arabic form of the name Tarshish and the Spanish appear to identify Tartessians as the early Britons.

4) There is no **historical** evidence that Tartessus was in Spain. Greek mythology simply placed it beyond the pillars of Hercules in the Atlantic Ocean. The great historian,

Herodotus had been told that the tin which was used in the Persian era, was from the Cassiterides or “tin islands” though he had no knowledge of where these islands were located or even if there was a North Sea on the northern side of Europe. Britain acquired the title of the “tin islands” because of the vast tin resources in Cornwall but Spain is a mainland country.

5) Tarshish in the latter days must have “young lions” of nations that are her offspring. Both Britain and Spain have had many colonies and have been great maritime powers but the British navy defeated the Spanish Armadas and Spain is no longer a great maritime power whereas the US began with British colonies and has seven navies that rule the world’s sea lanes.

6) Britain and America have strong ties with Arabia (Sheba and Dedan) which is linked to the last days whereas Spain has such no such links.

7) The location Tharsis in Spain is probably so named by the **British mining companies** that owned the mines in the 19th century. **The name is not Spanish.**

We therefore conclude that Britain, as the “Tin Isles” of ancient times is Tarshish, and that the “merchants of Tarshish and the young lions thereof” are the offshoots of Britain that will have a major role during the Tribulation period. They will be the first to bring the redeemed nation of Israel back to the land when Christ returns (Isa.60:9). ●