

# Coins and the Bible

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(with many thanks to Jill)

# Money

1Ti 6:10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

# Weights and Measures

# First Mention of Money in the Bible

Gen 13:1 And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south.

Gen 13:2 And Abram *was* very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.

Ussher: 1921 BC

# First Mention of the Use of Money

- Gen 17:12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which *is* not of thy seed.
- Gen 17:13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

# First Transaction

- Gen 23:3 And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying,
- Gen 23:4 *I am* a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.

Ussher: 1859 BC

# First Transaction

Gen 23:14 And Ephron answered Abraham, saying unto him,

Gen 23:15 My lord, hearken unto me: the land *is worth* four hundred **shekels** of silver; what *is* that betwixt me and thee? bury therefore thy dead.

# First Transaction

Gen 23:16 And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hundred **shekels** of silver, current *money* with the merchant.

# Other Measures - Bekah

Exo 38:26 A **bekah** for every man, *that is*, half a shekel, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for every one that went to be numbered, from twenty years old and upward, for six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty *men*.

Temple tax

# Other Measures – mina, gerah

Eze 45:12 And the shekel *shall be* twenty **gerahs**: twenty shekels, five and twenty shekels, fifteen shekels, shall be your **maneh**.

Note:  $20+25+15 = 60$

# Other Measures - Talent

Exo 38:27 And of the hundred **talents** of silver were cast the sockets of the sanctuary, and the sockets of the vail; an hundred sockets of the hundred talents, a talent for a socket.

# One Ounce of Silver

- 1 troy oz is about 31.1g
- 12 troy oz in a troy lb



# Relationships

## Babylonian system

- 1 talent (kikkar) = 60 mina, about 33.6 kg
- 1 mina (maneh) = 60 shekels, about 570 g
- 1 shekel (siclus), about  $9\frac{1}{2}$  g

approximately – heavy (43 kg) vs. light talent (25 kg), talent of silver vs. talent of gold, shekel of sanctuary vs. shekel of king, etc.

# Relationships

## Phoenician system (Jewish system)

- 1 talent = 60 mina, about 43½ kg
- 1 mina = 50 shekels, about 725 g
- 1 shekel = 20 gerah (obol)
  - Maccabean shekel 14.50-14.65g (of the sanctuary)

## So...

- 1 talent is about 1400 silver bars
- 1 mina is about 23 silver bars
- 1 shekel is a bit less than ½ silver bar

# Style

Gen 24:22 And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten *shekels* weight of gold;

Could be metal lumps of a certain weight, or could also be jewelry of a known weight

# Celtic Bronze Ring Money

- Celtic Gaul
  - 3 smooth rings, 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century BC
  - Beveled ring with extrusions, 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC



# The First Coinage

# The First Coinage

- Lydia
  - Aegean coast, now Turkey
- 7<sup>th</sup> century BC
- Electrum
  - naturally occurring alloy of silver and gold
    - 45-55% gold in Lydian coinage
- 14.1 g stater (month's pay for a soldier)
  - also 1/3<sup>rd</sup> (trite), 1/6<sup>th</sup> (hekte) ... 1/48<sup>th</sup>, 1/96<sup>th</sup>

# Lydia

- 1/3<sup>rd</sup> Stater (trite)
- Obverse:
  - Lion head right



# Lydia

- Reverse
  - Incuse punch



# Persian Coinage

# Esther

Est 2:16 So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus (Xerxes) into his house royal in the tenth month, which *is* the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

Ussher: 515 BC

# Ezra

Ezr 7:12 Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect *peace*, and at such a time.

Ezr 7:13 I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and *of* his priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own freewill to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee.

Ussher: 467 BC

# Nehemiah

Neh 2:1 And it came to pass... in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, *that* wine *was* before him: and I took up the wine, and gave *it* unto the king...

Neh 2:5 And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.

Ussher: 454 BC

# Persian Coinage - dram

- 1Ch 29:7 And gave for the service of the house of God of gold five thousand talents and ten thousand **drams**, and of silver ten thousand talents, and of brass eighteen thousand talents, and one hundred thousand talents of iron.
- dram -> adarkon (Strong: daric)

# Persian Coinage - dram

- Ezr 2:69 They gave after their ability unto the treasure of the work threescore and one thousand **drams** of gold, and five thousand pound of silver, and one hundred priests' garments.
- dram -> darkmon (Strong: drachma, but Bullinger: daric)

# Persian Coinage

- Daric (named after Darius)
- 485-420 BC
- Obverse:
  - Kneeling king with bow and spear
- Darius, father of Xerxes (Ahasuerus of Esther), father of Artaxerxes



# Persian Coinage

- Reverse:
  - Incuse punch



# Persian Coinage

- Siglos
- 450-330 BC
- Obverse:
  - Kneeling king with bow and spear
- 5.6 g, so 100 per mina, 1/6000 of Babylonian talent, or 1/2 shekel



# Persian Coinage

- Reverse:
  - Incuse punch



400 Silent Years

# 400 Silent Years

- Malachi becomes a prophet in 430 BC, Matthew begins with the birth of Christ
- No scripture, but lots of coinage
  - Alexander the Great
  - Greek city states
  - Roman republic
  - China, India, Middle East...

# 400 Silent Years

- Didrachm
- 400-360 BC
- Campania, Neapolis (now Naples, Italy)
- Obverse:
  - Head of water nymph right



# 400 Silent Years

- Reverse:
  - Man-headed bull right, being crowned by Nike (Greek personification of victory) flying above
- Hislop : Nimrod



# 400 Silent Years

- Obol
- Early 4<sup>th</sup> century BC
- Cilicia, Tarsos  
(southern coast of  
Turkey)
- Obverse:
  - Helmeted head of  
Athena (Greek  
goddess of wisdom  
and disciplined war),  
right



# 400 Silent Years

- Reverse:
  - Baal'tars (Lord of Tars[us]) seated, holding eagle



# 400 Silent Years

- Drachm
- Alexander III, the Great non-lifetime issue, ca. 300 BC
- Obverse:
  - Bust of Herakles (Greek hero, Hercules in the West) wearing lion skin headdress



# 400 Silent Years

- Reverse
  - Zeus (Greek king of the gods, god of sky and thunder) seated left holding eagle and scepter



# 400 Silent Years

- Æ
- 138-129 BC  
(Antiochos VII,  
Seleucid Kingdom)
- Antioch, Syria (now  
Antakya, Turkey) mint
- Obverse:
  - Head of Eros (Greek  
god of love)



# 400 Silent Years

- Reverse:
  - ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ  
ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ  
ΕΥΕΡΓΕΤΟΥ
  - Headdress of Isis  
(Egyptian archetypical  
wife and mother, wife  
of Osiris)



# 400 Silent Years

- As
- Rome, 211-206 BC
- Obverse:
  - Laureate head of bearded Janus (Roman god of gates, doors, beginnings and endings)
    - January, janitor
- Sear 627
- Hislop: Noah



# 400 Silent Years

- Reverse:
  - Prow of a galley, I above
  - ROMA in exergue



# 400 Silent Years

- AE
- 175-164 BC  
(Antiochos IV  
Epiphanes)
- Seleucid Kingdom
- Obverse:
  - ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ  
ANTIOXOY
  - Elephant with rider  
walking right;  
monogram before



# 400 Silent Years

- Reverse:
  - Nike walking right, holding wreath in extended right hand; monogram before
- Desecrated temple 167 BC, this led to Maccabean revolt, success of revolt commemorated by Hanukkah



# Birth of Jesus

# Birth of Jesus

Luk 2:1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

Luk 2:3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

Luk 2:4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem

# Augustus

- Denarius
- Lugdunum (now Lyon, France), 2 BC – AD 4
- Obverse:
  - CAESAR AVGVSTVS  
DIVI F PATER  
PATRIAE
  - Laureate head right
- Sear 1597



# Augustus

- Reverse:
  - C L CAESARES  
AVGVSTI F COS  
DESIG PRINC  
IVVENT
  - Caius and Lucius  
Caesars standing  
facing, shields and  
spears between them,  
simpulum and lituus  
above



Wise Men

# Wise Men

Mat 2:1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

Mat 2:2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

# Who Were They?

- 6<sup>th</sup> century Greek manuscript, Latin translation *Excerpta Latina Barbari*
  - Caspar, Melchoir, Balthasar
- Ethiopian Christianity
  - Hor, Karsudan, Basanater
- Armenian Christianity
  - Kagbha, Badadakharida, Badadilma
- Syrian Christianity
  - Larvandang, Gushnasaph, Hormisdas

# Example: Gondophares

- Name
  - Gudapharasa on coins
  - corrupts to Gaspar
  - which is similar to Caspar
- Occupation
  - First king of Indo-Parthian kingdom
    - so a wise man from the East

# Gondophares

- Æ tetradrachm
- AD 25-55
- Indo-Parthian Kingdom (now Afghanistan/Pakistan)
- Obverse:
  - ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ  
ΥΝΔΟΦΕΡΡΟΥ “King  
Gondophares, the  
Savior”
  - Bust of Gondophares



# Gondophares

- Reverse:
  - MAHARAJASA  
GUDAPHANISA  
TRATARASA "King  
Gondophares, the  
Savior" (in Kharoshti,  
an Indian script)
  - Winged Nike holding  
wreath and palm



# Azes II

- Drachm
- AD 1-35
- Indo-Scythian Kingdom (now Pakistan region)
- Obverse:
  - ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ  
ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ  
/ ΑΖΟΥ
  - King to right on horseback, holding a whip in his right hand



# Azes II

- Reverse:
  - MAHARAJASA  
RAJARAJASA  
MAHATASA / AYASA
  - Zeus standing to left  
holding winged Nike  
on outstretched right  
hand and long scepter  
in left hand



# Hermaios

- Drachm
- 40 BC – AD 1
- Bactrian Kingdom  
(now northern  
Afghanistan region)
- Obverse:
  - ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ  
ΕΡΜΑΙΟΥ
  - Bust right
- Sear 7740



# Hermaios

- Reverse:
  - Karosthi legend
  - Zeus seated, holding scepter
- Last king of western Indo-Greek, defeated by Kushan



# Herod I, the Great

# Herod I, the Great (40 – 4 BC)

Mat 2:1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem...

Mat 2:16 Then Herod... was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under...

# Herod I, the Great (40 – 4 BC)

- Prutah
- Obverse:
  - HPWΔ BACI
  - Anchor
- Hendin 500



# Herod I, the Great (40 – 4 BC)

- Reverse
  - Double cornucopia with caduceus between and dots above



# Herod I, the Great (40 – 4 BC)

- Double prutah
- Obverse
  - ΗΡΩΔΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ
  - Cross surrounded by open diadem – may be diadem symbolizing “king,” and X (Greek chi) symbolizing “priest” (not priest himself, but controlled temple)
- Hendin 490a



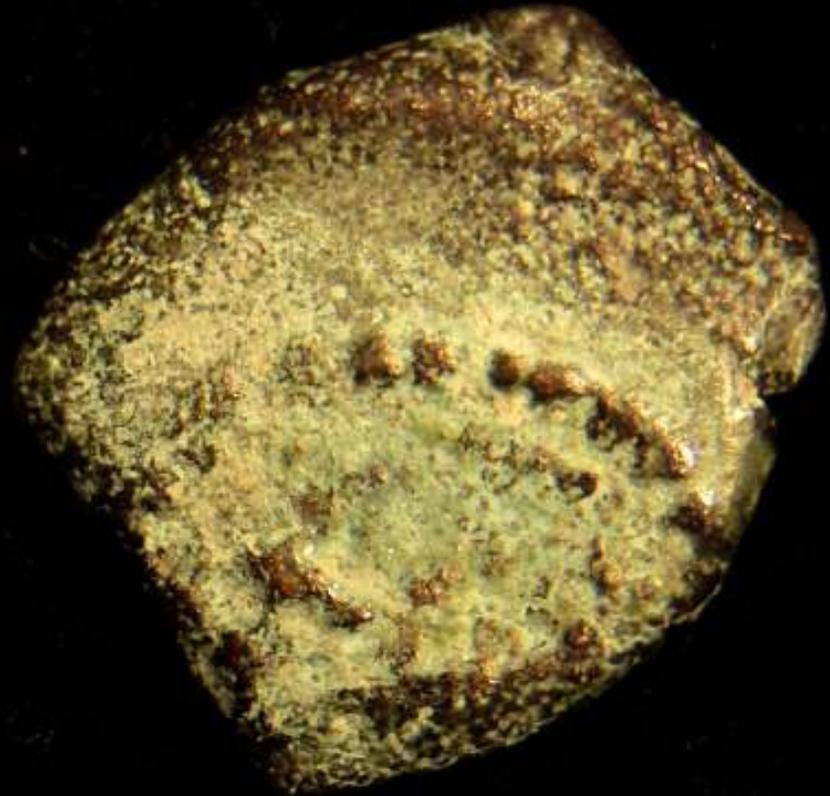
# Herod I, the Great (40 – 4 BC)

- Reverse
  - Tripod table flanked by palm branches
  - May be Temple “service vessels” silver table
  - Forbidden to depict Temple implements outside of the temple



# Herod I, the Great (40 – 4 BC)

- Lepton
- Obverse
  - ΒΑΣΙΛΗ ΗΡΩΔΑ
  - Cornucopia surrounded by dots
- Hendin 501



# Herod I, the Great (40 – 4 BC)

- Reverse
  - Eagle standing right
- First coin issued by a Jewish ruler for use by Jews with a graven image (second commandment)



# Widow's Mite

# Widow's Mite

Mar 12:41 And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

Mar 12:42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites (λεπτόν – lepton), which make a farthing (κοδράντης – quadrans).

# Widow's Mite

Mar 12:43 And he called *unto him* his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

Mar 12:44 For all *they* did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, *even* all her living.

# Widow's Mite

- In Greek, the word is “lepton”
- Value (Hendin, p. 419)
  - 48 leptons to buy a loaf of bread
  - 384 leptons in a denarius
- Probably a lepton of Alexander Jannaeus
  - minted a century before the event, but much more common than issues by others
  - circulated into at least the 4<sup>th</sup> century

# Widow's Mite

- Lepton
- Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BC)
- Obverse:
  - ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ  
ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ
  - Anchor
- Hendin 469



# Widow's Mite

- Reverse:
  - Star of eight rays surrounded by a diadem
  - Between the rays, characters of Yehohatan the King



# Widow's Mite

- Lepton
- Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BC)
- Obverse:
  - ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ  
ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ
  - Anchor within circle
- Hendin 471



# Widow's Mite

- Reverse:
  - Star of eight rays surrounded by a border of dots
  - Aramaic inscription "King Alexander Year 25" (78 BC)



Give to Caesar...

# Give to Caesar...

Luk 20:22 Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no?

Luk 20:23 But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me?

Luk 20:24 Shew me a penny (δηνάριον – denarius). Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Caesar's.

# Give to Caesar...

Luk 20:25 And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.

# Tribute Penny

- Denarius
- After AD 16
- Lugdunum (Lyon, France) mint
- Obverse:
  - TI CAESAR DIVI AVGVSTVS
  - TI : Tiberius – AD 14-37
  - Laureate head right
- Sear 1763



# Tribute Penny

- Reverse:
  - PONTIF MAXIM
  - His mother Livia seated right, holding a scepter and palm branch
- Pontifex Maximus – head of the state religion



# Temple Tax

# Temple Tax

Exo 30:13 This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel *is* twenty gerahs:) an half shekel *shall be* the offering of the LORD.

# Temple Tax

Joh 2:13 And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem,

Joh 2:14 And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting:

# Temple Tax

Joh 2:15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;

Joh 2:16 And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.

# Temple Tax

- Half shekel
- 79 BC
- Obverse:
  - Laureate head of Melqart right (Lord of Tyre, king of the city, Baal Sur)
- Hendin 918



# Temple Tax

- Reverse:
  - ΤΥΡΟΥΙΕΡ ΑΣ  
ΚΑΙΑΣΥΛΟΥ (of Tyre  
the holy and  
inviolable)
  - Eagle standing left on  
prow of a ship,  
carrying a palm under  
its right wing, club in  
field



# Thirty Pieces of Silver

# Thirty Pieces of Silver

Mat 26:14 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests,

Mat 26:15 And said *unto them*, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.

# Thirty Pieces of Silver

- Shekel
- 126-18 BC
- Obverse:
  - Laureate head of Melqart right
- Hendin 917



# Thirty Pieces of Silver

- Reverse:
  - ΤΥΡΟΥΙΕΡ ΑΣ  
ΚΑΙΑΣΥΛΟΥ (of Tyre  
the holy and  
inviolable)
  - Eagle standing left on  
prow of a ship,  
carrying a palm under  
its right wing, club in  
field

