

Coins and the Bible

Charles Calkins

(with many thanks to Jill)

Kings / Prefects / Procurators

Kings / Prefects / Procurators

- Called prefects from AD 6 – 44, called procurators from AD 44 on
- Roman civic official of Judea
- Not all issued coinage
- Coinage issued in the name of the emperor, not in their own name

Herod Archelaus (4 BC – AD 6)

- Lepton
- Obverse:
 - ΗΡΩΔΟΥ (of Herod)
 - Bunch of grapes on a vine with small leaf on left
- Hendin 505



Herod Archelaus (4 BC – AD 6)

- Reverse:
 - Tall helmet with crest and cheek straps, viewed from front, caduceus below left, below ΕΘΝΑΡΧΟΥ



Coponus (AD 6 – 9)

- Lepton
- L Λ θ ($\Lambda=30$, $\theta=9$: year 39 of Augustus, AD 8-9)
- Obverse:
 - Palm tree with two bunches of fruit
- Hendin 635
- Procurator under Augustus



Coponius (AD 6 – 9)

- Reverse:
 - KAICAPOC (of Caesar)
 - Ear of barley



Marcus Ambibulus (AD 9 – 12)

- Lepton
- LM (M=40 : year 40 of Augustus, AD 10)
- Obverse:
 - Eight-branched palm tree bearing two bunches of dates



Marcus Ambibulus (AD 9 – 12)

- Reverse:
 - KAICAPOC (of Caesar)
 - Ear of barley



Valerius Gratus (AD 15 – 26)

- Prutah
- Lϵ (ϵ=5 : year 5 of Tiberius, AD 18)
- Obverse:
 - IOYΛΙΑ (Julia Livia, mother of Tiberius)
 - Palm branch



Valerius Gratus (AD 15 – 26)

- Reverse:
 - TIB KAI CAP (Tiberius Caesar)
 - Wreath



Pontius Pilate (AD 26 – 36)

Mat 27:22 Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? *They* all say unto him, Let him be crucified.

Pontius Pilate (AD 26 – 36)

- Prutah
- LIZ, Z retrograde (AD 29 or 30)
- Minted in Jerusalem
- Obverse:
 - Date within wreath



Pontius Pilate (AD 26 – 36)

- Reverse:
 - IOYΛΙΑ ΚΑΙΣΑΡΟΣ
 - Lituus (instrument used by augurs to interpret will of the gods)



Pontius Pilate (AD 26 – 36)

- Prutah
- Minted in Jerusalem
- Obverse:
 - IOYΛΙΑ KAICAΠOC
 - Three bound ears of barley, the outer two ears droop
- Hendin 648



Pontius Pilate (AD 26 – 36)

- Reverse:
 - TIBERPIOY KAICAPOC
(of Tiberius Caesar)
 - Simpulum (libation
ladle – priest can taste
and pour wine over an
animal for sacrifice,
soothsayer can
examine entrails)



King Agrippa I (AD 37 – 44)

Act 12:1 Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth *his* hands to vex certain of the church.

Act 12:2-21 ... Killed James, imprisoned Peter (who escaped) ...

Act 12:22 And the people gave a shout, *saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.*

King Agrippa I (AD 37 – 44)

- Prutah
- LϚ (Ϛ=6 : AD 41-42)
- Obverse:
 - Three ears of barley growing between two leaves



King Agrippa I (AD 37 – 44)

- Obverse:
 - ΑΓΡΙΠΠΑ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ
(Agrippa King)
 - Umbrella-like canopy with fringes
- Grandson of Herod the Great



Antoninus Felix (AD 52 – 59)

- Act 23:24 And provide *them* beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring *him* safe unto Felix the governor.

Antoninus Felix (AD 52 – 59)

- Act 24:24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.
- Act 24:25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

Antoninus Felix (AD 52 – 59)

- Prutah
- LIΔ (I=10, Δ=4 : year 14 of Claudius, AD 54)
- Obverse:
 - TI ΚΛΑΥΔΙΟΣ
ΚΑΙΣΑΡ ΓΕΡΜ
(Tiberius Claudius
Caesar Germanicus)
 - Two crossed palm
branches
- Hendin 651



Antoninus Felix (AD 52 – 59)

- Reverse:
 - IOY / AIAAG / PIPPI / NA (Julia Agrippina, wife of Claudius)
 - Wreath tied at bottom with an X



Porcius Festus (AD 59 – 62)

Act 24:27 But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

...

Act 25:9 But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?

Porcius Festus (AD 59 – 62)

Act 25:10 Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest.

Act 25:11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.

Porcius Festus (AD 59 – 62)

Act 25:12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.

Porcius Festus (AD 59 – 62)

- Prutah
- Obverse:
 - NEP / WNO / C
 - Legend in a wreath tied at bottom with an X



Porcius Festus (AD 59 – 62)

- Reverse:
 - KAICAPO
 - Palm branch



Jewish War

Jewish War

- First of three major rebellions against Rome by Jews of Judea
- Began AD 66 in Caesarea
 - Greeks sacrificing birds in front of a synagogue, Roman garrison did not intercede
- Nero made Vespasian general, sent 60,000 troops
- AD 68 northern rebellion crushed, AD 70 Vespasian breaches walls of Jerusalem

Jewish War

- Prutah
- Year 2, AD 67-68
- Obverse:
 - Inscription “year two”
 - Amphora with broad rim and two handles
- Hendin 661
- Coins (shekels) to year 5



Jewish War

- Reverse:
 - Inscription "the freedom of Zion"
 - Vine leaf on small branch



Judea Capta

- Denarius
- Rome, AD 69-70
(Vespasian)
- Obverse:
 - IMP CAESAR
VESPASIANVS AVG
 - Laureate head right



Judea Capta

- Reverse:
 - Judea, as a mourning captive, seated right on the ground at the foot of a trophy
 - IVDAEA in exergue



Size Comparison



Diana

Diana

Act 19:27 So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.

Act 19:28 And when they heard *these sayings*, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great *is* Diana (Ἄρτεμις – Artemis) of the Ephesians.

Diana

- Denarius
- L. Hostilius Saserna, 48 BC
- Obverse:
 - Head of female Gallic captive right, carnyx (Celtic wind instrument) behind



Diana

- Reverse:
 - L HOSTILIVS
SASERNA
 - Cult statue of Diana
(Roman, Greek
Artemis – goddess of
the hunt and the
moon) facing, with
stag and spear
- Sear 419



Diana

- Æ
- AD 161-180
(Faustina, Jr)
- Lydia / Tabala (now
near Bergas,
Canakkale, Turkey –
near Troy)
- Obverse:
 - ΣΕΒΑΣ ΦΑΥΣΤΕΙΝΑ
 - Draped bust right



Diana

- Reverse:
 - TABAΛEΩN
 - Cult statue of Diana at Ephesos (Artemis Ephesia) wearing kalathos, with supports
- SNG Copenhagen 565
- Tabala is north of Ephesus, along the Aegean coast



Diana



Diana

- Denarius
- Rome, AD 214 (Julia Domna)
- Obverse:
 - IVLIA PIA FELIX AVG
 - Draped bust right
- Sear 7100



Diana

- Reverse:
 - DIANA LVCIFERA
 - Diana standing left, holding flaming torch with both hands



Ten Persecutions

Emperors

Nero – AD 67

Galba

Otho

Vitellius

Vespasian

Titus

Domitian – AD 81

Nerva

Trajan – AD 108

Hadrian

Antoninus Pius

Marcus Aurelius – AD 162

Lucius Verus

Commodus

Pertinax

Didius Julianus

Septimius Severus – AD 192

Caracalla

Geta

Macrinus

Diadumenian

Elagabalus

Alexander Severus

Maximinus Thrax – AD 235

Gordian I

Gordian II

Pupienus

Balbinus

Gordian III

Philip the Arab

Trajan Decius – AD 249

Herennius Etruscus

Hostilian

Trebonianus Gallus

Volusian

Aemilian

Valerian I – AD 257

Gallienus

Saloninus

Postumous

Marius

Victorinus

Tetricus I

Claudius II Gothicus

Quintillus

Aurelian – AD 274

Tacitus

Florian

Probus

Carus

Carinus

Numerian

Carausius

Allectus

Diocletian – AD 303

Maximian

First – Nero (AD 67)

- As
- Rome, AD 65
 - Paul
- Obverse:
 - NERO CAESAR AVG
GERM IMP
 - Laureate head right
- Sear 1974



First – Nero (AD 67)

- Reverse:
 - PACE P R VBIQ
PARTA IANVM
CLVSIT S C
 - Side wall of the “Twin
Janus.” Closed doors
meant Rome was not
at war with a foreign
enemy.



Second – Domitian (AD 81)

- Denarius
- Rome, AD 82
- Obverse:
 - IMP CAES
DOMITIANVS AVG P
M
 - Laureate head right



Second – Domitian (AD 81)

- Reverse:
 - TR POT COS VIII P P
 - Dolphin entwined around an anchor
- Sear 2745 (type) / 2749 (legend)



Third – Trajan (AD 108)

- Denarius
- Rome, AD 115
- Obverse:
 - IMP TRAIANVS AVG
GER DAC P M TR P
COS VI P P
 - Laureate head right
- Sear 3323



Third – Trajan (AD 108)

- Reverse:
 - DIVVS PATER
TRAIAN
 - M. Ulpius Traianus
(father) seated on
curule chair, holding
patera and scepter
- Commanded Legio X
Fretensis under
Vespasian in the
Jewish War (Sear II p.
124).



Fourth – Marcus Aurelius (AD 162)

- Denarius
- Rome, AD 164
- Obverse:
 - ANTONINVS AVG
 - ARMENIACVS
 - Head right



Fourth – Marcus Aurelius (AD 162)

- Reverse:
 - P M TR P XVIII IMP II
COS III
 - Emperor standing right
with spear, leaning on
shield
- RIC 91, RSC 468



Fourth – Marcus Aurelius (AD 162)

- ARMENIACUS
 - Title bestowed AD 164
- P M TR P XVII IMP II COS III
 - P M : Pontifex Maximus
 - head of the state religion
 - TR P : Tribunicia Potestas
 - Tribunician power – office of Tribune of the Plebs
 - can convene the senate, exercise capital punishment
 - TR P 18 is for the year starting December 10, AD 163

Fourth – Marcus Aurelius (AD 162)

- P M TR P XVIII IMP II COS III

- IMP : Imperator

- “Commander” – victorious general

- IMP 2 is AD 163-164

- COS : Consul

- highest elected office of the Roman Republic

- The most recent time a consulship was held (a third time) was for a year starting March 7, AD 161

- So... coin is dated AD 164

Fifth – Septimius Severus (AD 192)

- Denarius
- Rome, AD 199
- Obverse:
 - L SEPT SEV AVG IMP
XI PART MAX
 - Laureate head right



Fifth – Septimius Severus (AD 192)

Reverse:

- P M TR P VII COS II P
P
- Fortuna (Roman, Greek Tyche – personification of luck) standing holding cornucopia and rudder, prow at feet to right



Sixth – Maximinus (AD 235)

- Denarius
- Rome, AD 235-6
- Obverse:
 - IMP MAXIMINVS
PIVS AVG
 - Laureate, draped and
cuirassed bust right
- 8' 6" tall, could pull an
oxcart on his own



Sixth – Maximinus (AD 235)

- Reverse:
 - VICTORIA AVG
 - Victory advancing right holding wreath and palm
- Sear 8317



Seventh – Trajan Decius (AD 249)

- Antoninianus
- Rome, AD 250-251
- Obverse:
 - IMP C M Q
TRAIANVS DECIVS
AVG
 - Radiate, cuirassed
bust right



Seventh – Trajan Decius (AD 249)

- Reverse:
 - DACIA
 - Dacia standing left holding Dacian standard surmounted by a wolf's head
- Sear 9368



Eighth – Valerian (AD 257)

- Antoninianus
- Rome, AD 253-255
- Obverse:
 - IMP C P LIC
 - VALERIANVS AVG
 - Radiate bust right



Eighth – Valerian (AD 257)

- Reverse:
 - APOLINI
PROPVGnatori (To
Apollo the Defender)
 - Apollo (medicine /
healing, light, truth,
archery, plague)
standing right, drawing
bow
- Sear 9926
- Struck during a
plague



Eighth – Valerian (AD 257)

Sometimes, the art is a little off...



Shapur I

- Dirhim (Drachm)
- Sasanian Empire
- AD 241-272 (Shapur I)
- Obverse:
 - Mazda-worshipper divinity Shapur ... sacred beings
 - Bust right
- Zoroastrian



Shapur I

- Reverse
 - Fire altar with attendants
- Fire worship



Ninth – Aurelian (AD 274)

- Antoninianus, ca. AD 273
- Obverse:
 - IMP C AVRELIANVS AVG
 - Radiate cuirassed bust right



Ninth – Aurelian (AD 274)

- Reverse:
 - ORIENS AVG
 - Sol (Roman sun god), holding whip, advancing left between two captives
- Sear 11573var (no star)



Tenth – Diocletian (AD 303)

- Follis, ca. AD 301
- Obverse:
 - IMP DIOCLETIANVS
 - PF AVG
 - Laureate head right



Tenth – Diocletian (AD 303)

- Reverse:
 - SACRA MONET
AVGG ET CAESS
NOSTR
 - Moneta (Roman
personification of
riches and wealth)
standing left holding
scales and cornucopia
 - SIS in exergue (Siscia)
- RIC VI 134a



Pagan Types

Serpents

Gen 3:4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

Gen 3:5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

Serpents

- Æ
- AD 193-211
(Septimius Severus)
- Obverse:
 - Laureate bust right



Serpents

- Reverse:
 - NIKAIEΩN (Bithynia, Nicea, now in Turkey)
 - Serpent
- Council of Nicea, AD 325
 - First uniform Christian doctrine, Nicene Creed



Serpents

- Æ
- AD 193-211
(Septimius Severus)
- Obverse:
 - Laureate bust right



Serpents

- Reverse:
 - ΝΙΚΟΠΟΛΙΤΩΚΙΠΡΟΣ
(Bithynia, Nicea, now in Turkey)
 - Serpent climbing the leg of a tripod



Nimbate Serpent

- Reverse:
 - ΜΗΤΡΟ
ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΠΟΛΕΩΣ
(Philippopolis, Thrace,
now Plovdiv, Bulgaria)
 - Nimbate serpent



Serpents

- Denarius
- Rome, AD 218-219
(Elagabalus)
- Obverse:
 - IMP CAES M AVR
ANTONINVS AVG
 - Laureate bust right



Serpents

- Reverse:
 - SALVS ANTONINI AVG
 - Salus (Roman goddess of health, Greek: Hygiea, father Aesculapius, god of medicine) feeding a snake held in her arms
- Sick emperor
- Serpent sheds skin – symbol of rebirth and fertility



Snake Biga

- Denarius
- 78 BC (M. Volteius M.f.)
- Obverse:
 - Head of young Bacchus (Gr. Dionysos, god of wine) wreathed with ivy
- Sear 314



Snake Biga

- Reverse:
 - Ceres (Roman goddess of growing plants) in biga of snakes right, holding torch in each hand
 - Cereal
 - M VOLTEI M F in exergue



Sphinx

- Hemidrachm
- AD 135 (Hadrian)
- Alexandria, Egypt
- Obverse:
 - ΑΥΤ ΚΑΙΣ ΤΡΙΑΝΟC
 - ΑΔΡΙΑΝΟC CEB
 - Laureate bust right
- Sear 3755var



Sphinx

- Reverse:
 - LIH (I=10, H=8 : year 18, AD 135)
 - Sphinx seated left, forepaw on wheel
- Compared to cherubim (mixture of different creatures)



Constantine

Sol

- Follis, AD 310-313
- Treveri mint (now Trier, Germany)
- Obverse:
 - CONSTANTINVS PF AVG
 - Laureate cuirassed bust facing right
- RIC VI 893



Sol

- Reverse:
 - SOLI INVICTO
COMITI
 - Radiate and draped
bust of Sol facing right
- Head of Sol reverse –
still pagan
- COMES - companion



Hoc Signo Victor Eris

- Æ
- AD 350 (Constantius II)
- Obverse:
 - DN CONSTANTIVS
PF AVG
 - Diademed, draped and cuirassed bust facing right, A behind



Hoc Signo Victor Eris

- Reverse:
 - HOC SIGNO VICTOR ERIS
 - Emperor, diademed and in military dress, holding standard with Chi-Rho, crowned with a wreath by Victory
 - SIS in exergue (Siscia)
- Milvian bridge AD 312 vs. Maxentius



Looking to Heaven

- Follis
- AD 328
- Obverse:
 - CONSTANTINVS
MAX AVG
 - Rosette diademed
head, right, gazing to
heaven



Looking to Heaven

- Reverse:
 - CONSTANTINIANA
DAFNE
 - Victory seated on
cippus facing left, but
looking right; palm in
each hand. Trophy in
front and kneeling
captive at feet turning
head to look, but
spurned by Victory



Hand of God

- Æ 4
- ca. AD 337
- Obverse:
 - DV CONSTANTINVS
PT AVGG
 - Veiled head facing
right



Hand of God

- Reverse:
 - Constantine in a quadriga galloping, hand of God above, reaching down for him
 - CONS in exergue (Constantinople)
- RIC VIII-52



Late Empire

Christograms

- Æ 3
- AD 367-375 (Valens)
- Obverse:
 - D N VALENS P F AVG
 - Diademed, draped & cuirassed bust right



Christograms

- Reverse:
 - GLORIA ROMANORVM
 - Emperor walking right, head left, dragging bound captive by the hair & holding labarum
- Siscia (Sisak, Croatia)
- Standard with Christogram : 
labarum



Christograms

- Æ 2
- AD 350 (Constantius II)
- Obverse:
 - DN CONSTANTIVS
PF AVG
 - Diademed, draped and cuirassed bust right
- RIC VIII 284



Christograms

- Reverse:
 - CONCODRIA
MILITVM
 - Emperor in military
dress standing facing,
head left, star above,
holding labara
 - ΓSIS in exergue
(Siscia, now Sisak,
Croatia)



Christograms

- Æ 2
- AD 351-355
(Constantius II)
- Obverse:
 - DN CONSTANTIVS
IVN NOB C
 - Cuirassed bust right, A
behind
- RIC VII 329



Christograms

- Reverse:
 - FEL TEMP REPARATIO
 - Emperor in military dress standing left on galley, holding Victory on globe and labarum, Victory steers the ship
 - III in field
 - BSIS in exergue (Siscia, now Sisak, Croatia)



Christograms

- Æ 2
- AD 379-395 (Aelia Flaccilla, wife of Theodosius I)
- Obverse:
 - Diademed and draped bust right



Christograms

- Reverse:
 - SALVS REPUBLICAE
 - health/safety of the nation
 - Victory seated right, inscribing Christogram on a shield fixed to the trunk of a tree
 - SMNA in exergue (Nicomedia, now Izmit, Turkey)



Julian II, the Apostate

- Æ 2
- AD 361-363
- Obverse:
 - DN FL CL IVLIANVS
PF AVG
 - Diademed draped and
cuirassed bust right



Julian II, the Apostate

- Reverse:
 - SECVRITAS REIPVB
 - Apis bull with two stars above
 - TECT in exergue (Thessalonica – think 1 Ths and 2 Ths)
- RIC VIII 225



Theodosius I

- Æ 4
- AD 379-395
- Obverse:
 - DN THEODOSIVS PF AVG
 - Diademed draped and cuirassed bust right



Theodosius I

- Reverse:
 - VICTORIA AVGGG
 - Victory walking left
 - ESIS in exergue
(Siscia, now Sisak,
Croatia)



Honorius

- Solidus
- Ravenna, AD 402-423
- Obverse:
 - DN HONORIVS PF AVG
 - Diademed, draped and cuirassed bust right



Honorius

- Reverse:
 - VICTORIA AVGGG
 - Honorius standing right, foot on a captive, holding a standard and Victory, R V in field
 - COMOB (Comitatus mint, the mint in the Emperor's court; OB short for "obryziacum aurum" - "fine gold")
- Rome sacked by Visigoth Alaric I 410

