

Luke 20:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Shew me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it?
They answered and said, Caesar's.

Analysis

Shew me a penny (ἐπιδείξατέ μοι δηνάριον, *epideixate moi dēnaron*)—Jesus asks for the tribute coin itself, forcing his accusers to produce it. The δηνάριον (*dēnaron*, *denarius*) was a Roman silver coin, a day's wage. By having them produce it, Jesus subtly reveals they carry Caesar's currency while questioning him about its use.

Whose image and superscription hath it? (τίνος ἔχει εἰκόνα καὶ ἐπιγραφήν, *tinos echei eikona kai epigraphēn*)—The εἰκών (*eikōn*, 'image') recalls Genesis 1:27, where humanity bears God's image. Caesar's coin bears Caesar's image; humans bear God's image. The ἐπιγραφή (*epigraphē*, 'inscription') proclaimed Tiberius as 'son of the divine Augustus,' an idolatrous claim that made the coin doubly offensive to Jews.

Historical Context

The denarius of Tiberius (AD 14-37) showed his profile with the inscription 'TI CAESAR DIVI AVG F AUGUSTUS' (Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus). The reverse showed a seated female figure (Pax or Livia) with 'PONTIF MAXIM' (high priest). Jews particularly objected to graven images and divine claims for Caesar.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. Why does Jesus make them produce the coin rather than answering abstractly about taxation?
2. How does the concept of bearing God's image contrast with coins bearing Caesar's image?
3. What does your wallet (or digital payment methods) reveal about what 'kingdoms' you participate in?

Interlinear Text

ἐπιδείξατέ	μοι	δηνάριον·	τίνος	ἔχει	εἰκόνα	καὶ
Shew	me	a penny	Whose	hath it	image	and
G1925	G3427	G1220	G5101	G2192	G1504	G2532

ἐπιγραφὴν	ἀποκριθέντες	δὲ	εἶπον,	Καίσαρος
superscription	They answered	and	said	Caesar's
G1923	G611	G1161	G2036	G2541

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 18:28 (Parallel theme): But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.