

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 dēnarion)—Jesus asks for the tribute coin itself, forcing his accusers to produce it. The δηνάριον (dēnarion, 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

ἐπιγραφήν 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.