

# Money

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### Explanation

Greek, Roman, and Jewish coins circulated in Judea and Galilee during New Testament times. Many of these pieces of copper, silver, or gold are mentioned by name in the Gospels. They range from the smallest “widow’s mite” to the much larger “denarius” or “stater.” Values represented by these coins are important in understanding the meaning of certain passages, such as the coin in the fish’s mouth, which was one stater, exactly the amount needed to pay the annual temple tax for two people. A talent was not a coin but a large ingot of metal, weighing from 50 to 92 pounds. Variations occurred from one century to another and from one land to another. One talent of gold was an enormous sum, let alone the 10,000 talent debt owed by the unjust steward to his lord.

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### References

- Christopher Howgego, *Ancient History from Coins* (London: Routledge, 1995).  
Nanci DeBloois, “Coins in the New Testament,” *MWNT*, 239–51.  
John W. Betlyon, “Coinage,” *ABD*, 1:1076–89.  
T. Edgar Lyon, “Greco-Roman Influences on the Holy Land,” *Ensign*, September 1974, 20–21.

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RATIOS	GREEK	ROMAN	JEWISH	FUNCTIONAL VALUE	REFERENCE
50,000	50,000 silver coins			magical books burned	Acts 19:19
14,616	talent (Tyrian)			42 kilograms	Mt 25:15
6,960	talent (Galilean)			20 kilograms	Mt 25:15
300		300 denarii		value of ointment	Jn 12:5
200	denarii			feed multitude = 50 staters	Jn 6:7
100	mina			= 1/60 talent (Galilean)	Lk 19:13
120	30 shekels			30 pieces of silver	Mt 26:15
100		100 denarii		owed to servant	Mt 18:28
25		denarius (gold)			
10	10 drachmai			woman's 10 coins	Lk 15:8
4	stater		shekel	coin in fish's mouth	Mt 17:27
2	didrachm		half shekel	annual temple tax paid to innkeeper	Mt 17:24 Lk 10:35
1	drachma	denarius (silver)		render to Caesar a measure of wheat one day's labor compare one dollar	Mt 22:19–21 Rev 6:6
.10–.06		assarion		two sparrows compare one dime or nickel	Mt 10:29
.025	kordantes	quadrans		uttermost farthing widow's mites compare two cents	Mt 5:26 Mk 12:42
.0125	lepton		prutah	very last mite smaller in size than a penny	Lk 12:59



Bronze lepton



Silver denarius



Silver shekel