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# Who Ruled Judaea?

Grades 5–8 · Social Studies

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ADMIT ONE

NAME

DATE

CLASS

In Jesus' lifetime, no single person ruled Judaea. An emperor in Rome, kings from Herod's family and Roman governors all held power there — and each of them made coins. Two thousand years later, those coins are evidence you can hold of who was in charge.

## HISTORICAL METHOD

### Corroboration

One source can be mistaken. A historian trusts a claim more when **independent** sources — made by different people for different reasons — agree.

## OI PART 1 Test the claims

Three rulers, their coins and a second witness. What does each source add, and how strong is the claim?

| RULER AND COIN                                                                                                                                      | THE NEW TESTAMENT SAYS                                                                                            | THE SECOND WITNESS                                                                                                 | YOUR VERDICT: WHAT DOES EACH SOURCE ADD? |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <br><b>Pontius Pilate</b><br>Prefect, 26–36 AD<br>Coin: 29/30 AD | Pilate tries Jesus and washes his hands before the crowd (Matthew 27:24).                                         | A limestone block inscribed with his name and title, found at Caesarea Maritima in 1961; now in the Israel Museum. |                                          |
| <br><b>Herod Agrippa I</b><br>King, 41 AD<br>Coin: 41–44 AD      | He executes James, seizes Peter, accepts divine honors from a crowd and is struck down, eaten by worms (Acts 12). | The Jewish historian Josephus ( <i>Antiquities</i> 19.8.2) describes his death in almost identical terms.          |                                          |
| <br><b>Claudius</b><br>Emperor, 41–54 AD<br>Coin: bronze as      | Aquila and Priscilla reach Corinth because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome (Acts 18:2).               | The Roman historian Suetonius ( <i>Claudius</i> 25.4) confirms the edict, dated to about 49 AD.                    |                                          |

## O2

### PART 2

#### A detail that fits

When Festus reopened Paul's case, Paul used his right as a Roman citizen to appeal to the emperor (Acts 25:10–12). Scholars often note that this detail reflects accurate knowledge of Roman legal practice, and Festus minted coins in the years Acts describes. Is getting the **system** right good evidence that a writer got the **events** right? Explain.

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## O3

### PART 3

#### What can a coin prove?

Consider these facts from the exhibition:

- Some scholars once doubted Pilate existed. His coins were there before the 1961 stone: *evidence all along*.
- Pilate's coin shows pagan symbols, but it says nothing about the trial of Jesus.
- The widow's lepton, minted under King Alexander Jannaeus in 103–76 BC, was still in use a century later.
- Three coins in the exhibition are replicas, because originals are exceptionally rare.

Write an argument: **what can coins prove about the rulers of the New Testament, and what can they not prove?** Make a claim, use at least two pieces of evidence, and answer one objection.

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#### MINI MUSEUM CONNECTION

Case 8 holds the coins of Agrippa I, Claudius and Festus: the rulers the apostles stood before. Which of the three has the strongest outside corroboration, and which depends most on Acts alone?

[minimuseumproject.org/exhibitions/in-their-hands](http://minimuseumproject.org/exhibitions/in-their-hands)