

12 Caesars

Denarius. The denarius was first struck in or about [211 BC](#). The value at its introduction was 10 [asses](#), giving the denarius its name which translates to "containing ten". In about [141 BC](#) it was re-tariffed at 16 asses, to reflect the decrease in weight of the [as](#). The denarius continued to be the main coin of the empire until it was replaced by the [antoninianus](#) in the middle of the [3rd century](#).

It is difficult to give comparative values for money from before the [20th century](#), due to vastly different types of products. Its purchasing power in terms of bread has been estimated at [US\\$20](#) in the early empire. Classical historians regularly say that in the late [Roman Republic](#) and early [Roman Empire](#) the daily wage for an unskilled laborer and common soldier was 1 denarius. The actual silver content of the Denarius was about 50 [grain \(measure\)](#), or 1/10 [troy ounce](#) under the Empire.

The fineness of the silver content varied with political and economic circumstances.

As. The as was introduced in ca. [280 BC](#) as a large [cast](#) bronze coin during the Roman Republic, the word as meaning unit or unity.

After the as had been issued as a cast coin for about seventy years, and its weight had been reduced in several stages. The denarius, or 'tenner', was at first tariffed at ten asses, but about 140 B.C. it was retariffed at sixteen asses. This is said to have been a result of financing the [Punic Wars](#).



 Nero as

The as continued to be produced until the 3rd century AD. It was the lowest valued coin regularly issued during the Roman Empire.

[Julius Caesar](#), [Augustus](#), [Tiberius](#), [Caligula](#), [Claudius](#), [Nero](#), Galba, Otho, Vitellius, [Vespasian](#), [Titus](#) and [Domitian](#) are generally regarded as "The twelve Caesars". The Twelve Caesars are also regarded as a group because the historian [Suetonius](#) wrote biographies for these twelve and no more.

Gaius Julius Caesar ([100 BC](#) – [March 15, 44 BC](#)), was a [Roman military](#) and [political](#) leader and one of the most influential men in world history. He played a critical role in the transformation of the [Roman Republic](#) into the [Roman Empire](#).



This coin declares Caesar, Dictator for Life. He did serve as Dictator for the remainder of his life, but his life would end only a few weeks after this issue. For Caesar to put his image on coins and essentially declare himself king was too much for Brutus and his republican allies. This coin (along with other similar types) is sometimes called "the coin that killed Caesar." This coin was minted for Caesar's projected Parthian war. Specimens of this type were often carelessly struck indicating the mint was working under great pressure.

5338. Silver denarius, S 1413, Syd 1072, Craw 480/10, RSC 38, EF, wonderful portrait, 3.81g, 19.7mm, 190°, Rome mint, moneyer P Sepullius Macer, Jan-Feb 44 B.C.; obverse CAESAR DICT PERPETVO, wreathed head of Caesar right; reverse P SEPVLLIVS MACER, Venus standing left holding Victory and scepter, shield at feet right; flat strike areas;

Augustus (IMP•CAESAR•DIVI•F•AVGVSTVS; [63 BC](#) – [AD 14](#)), known as Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus was the first and among the most important of the [Roman Emperors](#).

Although he preserved the outward form of the [Roman Republic](#), he ruled as an [autocrat](#) for 41 years, longer than any subsequent Emperor; and his rule is the dividing line between the Republic and the [Roman Empire](#). He ended a century of [civil wars](#) and gave Rome an era of peace, prosperity, and imperial greatness, known as the [Pax Romana](#), which lasted for over 200 years.

Augustus Denarius. CAESAR AVGVSTVS DIVI F PATER PATRIAE. laureate head right / AVGVSTI F COS DESIG PRINC IVVENT C, L CAESARES below, Gaius & Lucius standing front with shields & spears; in field above, a lituus left & simpulum right, facing outwards ("dP"). BMC 536, RSC 43b.

Emperor Tiberius

It was during the reign of Tiberius that Jesus Christ was crucified.

The accounts of Tiberius' reign are contradictory.

When Tiberius died the court at Rome flocked to the banner of Caligula (Caius Caesar), son of Germanicus. Tiberius himself had believed that Caligula would have the character and ability required to put Rome back on its tracks.

Caligula

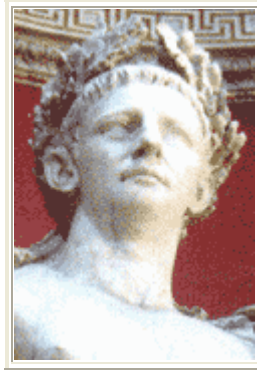
Caligula too had shown great promise in his youth but unfortunately he is best remembered for his bizarre acts of madness. Modern critics suggest that his rapid change of mental health were in all probability due to some form of disorder such as schizophrenia. In his moments of lucidity he seems to have been good-natured.

"Caligula" was not in fact his name but rather his nickname meaning "little boots", by virtue of the soldier's shoes (Caligae) he used to wear as a child on his father's military camp.

In spite of being mad he was very conscious of the possibility of following Tiberius' fate and so he instituted a powerful military guard called the "Praetorians". As he rightly expected, his plans to do away with the greater part of the senate and any personal opponents soon led to a conspiracy being formed against him and he was murdered - by the captain of the Praetorian guards. The reign of Caligula lasted 4 years, 37-41AD. As with Tiberius, Suetonius' pen made little positive concessions to Caligula.

Having acquired great political strength the Praetorian guards proclaimed Caligula's uncle Claudius as emperor.

Claudius



Claudius, Vatican Museums, Vatican City

Tiberius Claudius Drusus Nero Germanicus (10 BC - AD 54)

Tiberius Claudius Drusus Nero Germanicus was born in Lugdunum (Lyon) in 10 BC, as the youngest son of Nero Drusus (Tiberius' brother) and of Antonia the younger (who was the daughter of Marc Antony and Octavia).

Suffering from ill-health and an alarming lack of social skills, for which most believed him mentally handicapped, he received no public office from Augustus except once being invested as an augur (an official Roman soothsayer). Under Tiberius he held no office at all.

Generally he was considered an embarrassment at court.

Under Caligula's reign he was granted a consulship as colleague to the emperor himself (AD 37), but otherwise he was treated very badly by Caligula (who was his nephew), suffering public disrespect and scorn from him at court.

At the assassination of Caligula in January AD 41, Claudius fled to one of the apartments of the palace and hid behind one of the curtain. He was discovered by the praetorians and taken to their camp, where the two praetorian prefects proposed him to the troops who hailed him emperor.

Under Claudius many public engineering works were undertaken. He himself enjoyed taking part in the great projects. One of these involved the draining of a lake. When all was ready after 11 years worth of preparatory works he had a great

naval battle arranged on the lake, fought by 20,000 convicts and watched upon by the citizens of Rome.

In spite of having no military experience he left Rome in the year 43 AD to conquer Britain. The people of Rome found this unlikely expedition amusing but he was good and careful to choose his generals well and it is interesting to note that the future emperor Vespasian fought under him. To everyone's surprise Claudius came back in glory. He was magnanimous and dignified with his vanquished enemies and was the first emperor to grant freedom to an enemy king: Caractacus.

Unfortunately for Claudius he loved women. His fourth marriage is well remembered because his wife Messalina was much the same as he and it is difficult to decide which of them had more extra marital relationships. Eventually Messalina had to be put to death as she was under suspicion of plotting to take over the throne with her lover. With his fifth marriage he made the mistake of marrying his thirty-year-old niece Agrippina. Agrippina was a particularly power hungry woman who like Augustus' wife Livia was obsessed with her son's career. Agrippina grew tired of waiting for her son Nero to become emperor and so she poisoned Claudius with a plate of mushrooms.

Claudius, Æ as, (10.84g) struck after 50 AD, TI CLAVDIVS CAESAR AVG P M TRP IMP P P Bare head left. / LIBERTAS AVGVSTA Libertas standing, head left, holding cap, S C at sides. Is the Augusta portrayed the Mother of Claudius, Antonia?



Emperor Nero

During his youth Nero was tutored by the stoic philosopher Seneca who had been recalled from the exile which Caligula had inflicted upon him. During these early years Nero is said to have refused statues in his honour from being erected and even more interestingly to have done his utmost to avoid sentencing people to death.

As well as losing his mind he also laid waste to the treasury and so it wasn't long before he set to confiscating the wealth of any opponents he might find on his path, particularly the senators. Seneca attempted to reign Nero in but soon realised that there was little hope for him to do any good and so he retired, thus removing the last hope of sanity.

A particularly important moment came ten years into his reign: An enormous fire burned down much of Rome in July of 64AD. In terms of scale this event was not dissimilar to the great fire of London. Nero is said to have done much to help the citizens: Grain was sold at a heavily discounted price, the palace gardens were opened so that refugees might have somewhere to go and new buildings were constructed to provide housing. However the vox populi (the voice on the street) was that Nero had lit the fire himself and while Rome burned he had sung and played his lyre.

However Nero grew increasingly paranoid and tyrannical which led to plots being formed against him. Many were put to death to do away with the increasing number of enemies but eventually the armies in the provinces began to revolt and his own Praetorian guard refused to protect him. The senate saw that Nero was alone and set to ensure the support of the Praetorian guard after which they sentenced him to death by whipping. On hearing this Nero preferred to commit suicide. When dying he is said to have exclaimed "what an artist dies with me!"

The Year of the Four Emperors

The election of Nero's successor was no easy thing, particularly when no one was left of the Caesar family. This led to several pretenders laying a claim to being named emperor and as was to be expected several made it but in quick succession: Galba was put forward by the troops in Spain and the senate supported him, while in Rome the Praetorian guard supported Otho. Otho hoped to be chosen as successor to Galba but he was not and so the Praetorian guard killed Galba. Otho took over but the troops in Spain and Gaul chose to support a general called Vitellius. Vitellius' forces met those of Otho and defeated him. Otho committed suicide and Vitellius took over. At this point another general called Vespasian was put forward as an alternative by the troops in Syria. Eventually Vitellius was put to death and Vespasian finally took over. The period from Nero to Vespasian was no longer than a year: 69AD.

Vitellius 69AD

Aulus Vitellius Germanicus ([September 24, 15](#) – [December 22, 69](#)), also called **Aulus Vitellius Germanicus Augustus**, was [Roman Emperor](#) from [April 17, 69](#) to [December 22](#)

of the same year, one of the emperors in the "[Year of the Four Emperors](#)." He was the son of [Lucius Vitellius](#) and his wife Sextilia, and had one brother, [Lucius Vitellius the younger](#).

Vitellius AR denarius. A VITELLIVS GERM IMP AVG TR P, bare head right / XV VIR SACR FAC Tripod, raven below, dolphin above. Fine.



Emperor Vespasian

Imperator Caesar Vespasianus Augustus (born [9 AD](#), died [June 23, 79AD](#)), known originally as Titus [Flavius](#) Vespasianus, was [emperor](#) of [Rome](#) from [69](#) to [79](#). Vespasian was the founder of the short-lived, though influential, [Flavian dynasty](#), being succeeded as emperor by his sons [Titus](#) and [Domitian](#). He ascended the throne at the end of the tumultuous [Year of the Four Emperors](#). Vespasian's reign is best known for his reforms following the demise of the [Julio-Claudian Dynasty](#), the campaign against [Judaea](#), and for starting the construction of the [Colosseum](#).

Emperor Titus 79-81AD

Vespasian's legacy was left to his son Titus. Like Vespasian Titus was also a builder but while Vespasian was as coarse and pragmatic as his military career had made him Titus was rather more idealistic and full of good morals. He was known to his countrymen as a man of great kindness - "the delight of mankind" but this should be read in context: He celebrated his brother Domitian's birthday in public games which involved the death of over two thousand Jews in gladiatorial combat or fighting against wild animals.

Titus completed the Colosseum. The amphitheatre could seat over eighty thousand spectators and entertain them with shows of great variety, ranging from naval battles (by filling the bottom of it with water) through to stage shows, fights between animals and most famously, gladiatorial hand-to-hand combat.

The arch of Titus is particularly prominent in the Forum to this day. It was erected by Vespasian in honour of Titus' conquest of Jerusalem.

It was during the reign of Titus that mount Vesuvius erupted and buried Pompey and Herculaneum.

The reign of good Titus was very short as unfortunately he died whilst attending the sick in a plague which had struck Rome.

Rx: TRPIXIMPXVCOSVIIPP



Emperor Domitian 81-96AD

Titus Flavius Domitianus ([24 October 51](#) – [18 September 96](#)), commonly known as **Domitian**, was a [Roman Emperor](#) of the *gens Flavia*. Domitianus was a member of the [Flavian Dynasty](#), being the son of [Vespasian](#), by his wife Domitilla, and brother of [Titus](#), whom he succeeded on 14 October, [81](#).

Domitian succeeded his brother Titus as emperor. Unfortunately both his character and reign were rather more erratic than his brother and father's and this eventually lead to his assassination and to the senate's decree to remove his name from documents and monuments. Early in his reign numerous senators as well as part of the army plotted against him and this could be the reason for his suspicious attitude to those about him. Certainly he was self-centred and rather like Nero he had statues of himself erected and instructed his subjects to burn incense and worship him as a god.

Existing monotheist religions, particularly the Christians and Jews of the time were not in a position to worship any other but the one God and this was read to mean they were treacherous and unfaithful to their emperor. They were therefore savagely persecuted. As a point of reference, the apostle John was banished at this time.

Domitian is also understood to have been rather weak as a military leader.

In spite of all these rather negative attributes Domitian is said to have ruled the provinces firmly and wisely.

Denarius, Rome, 86/7AD, Obv TRPVI, Reverse IMPXIIICOSXIIICENSPP
Minerva fighting R with spear and shield



Domitian denarius dating,

It all has to do with chronology. Domitian fell into the habit of striking four aureus/denarius types of Minerva simultaneously: 1 fighting right, 2 fighting right on prow, 3 standing left with thunderbolt, 4 standing left with spear. In general these will be of roughly equal availability in each period. -- Meanwhile he was dating his coins (or more properly, dating himself) by three different sets of titles: the consulate, which runs through a calendar year (though he didn't renew it each year), the annual Tribunician power, always held and renewed in his case on the 13th September, and the accumulated imperatorships, which were enlarged whenever any of his generals won a battle of sufficient importance. So, for the year 85 AD through 12 September he is [first] COS XI, TRP IIII (carried over from the previous September) and IMP VIII, presumably for something that happened this year since there is no evidence for IMP VII in 84 AD. The coins with these titles are relatively common.