

New Octavian / Divus Julius bronze: CAESAR DIVI FILIUS

Discussion in 'Ancient Coins' started by Julius Germanicus, Jun 19, 2020.

[Octavian-divus-julius-bronze-caesar-divi-filius.361995](#)

While Octavian was active in the south of the Italian peninsula in 38 b.C, he used Tarentum as base port for his campaign against the renegade Sextus Pompeius.

It may have been here that he struck his handsome and enigmatic DIVOS IVLIVS emission as the son of the divine C. Julius Caesar, which is not only a good example of the political propaganda of that time, but can also be seen as the prototype for all roman imperial portrait bronze coins to come.



CAESAR DIVI F - bare head of Octavian right
DIVOS IVLIVS - wreathed head of Divus Julius Caesar right
Sestertius (?), southern Italy, 38 b.C.
30 mm / 19,73 gr
RPC 620; Crawford 535/1; Sear Imperators 308

Struck with 21 obverse and 27 reverse dies, this was one of the most abundant bronze emissions produced during the final stage of the Roman Republic. A large number of contemporary imitations, most likely struck in Gaul, are known and feature a cruder style, thin flans and inferior metal.

There is a second type (RPC 621, Crawford 535/2) which has the name "DIVOS IVLIVS" in two lines within a laurel-wreath (struck with another 19 obverse and 22 reverse dies) instead of the Caesar portrait on the reverse, but like most collectors I was looking for this version as it features what is the only portrait of the most famous Roman available on a roman bronze coin.

Therefore there would have been no substitute for a specimen of this as the beginning point of my portrait Sestertius gallery.

Octavian's adoptive father, Julius Caesar, was officially consecrated in 42 BC as Divus Julius, the highest god next to Jupiter Maximus. On the very day of the games a comet was visible for seven days in the northern part of the sky, as testified by Plinius the Elder in his Natural History. The common people believed that this star represented the soul of Caesar received among the spirits of the immortal gods.

On the southeastern narrow side of the Roman Forum in Rome, where the body of the murdered Caesar was cremated, a Temple for Divus Julius was built from 42 BC and dedicated 18 August 29 BC.

Julius Caesar was found worthy of divinity by all parties: "He was added to the number of the gods, not only by a formal resolution, but also in the conviction of the people" (Suetonius, Divus Julius, 88.1).

As much as Julius Caesar legally and in the belief of millions had become a god, Octavian, in his new guise as Caesar Divi Filius and later Augustus, could claim to be indeed the legal son of a god.

In the five decades after laying this claim Augustus managed to prove himself worthy of divinity in every sense by creating an age of peace and prosperity for the (Roman) world.

Loved by the common people and honored by the Senate in every possible way, his soul like his father's ascended to the heavens (in the shape of an Eagle, as a praetor* swore by oath). Augustus joined Caesar in Roman Pantheon, a temple was built for him at the forum, and his cult continued unaffected for centuries.

It was while this son of a god was worshipped throughout the empire that a child was born in relative obscurity. Four centuries later Theodosius the Great in the name of that child and his father, a jealous god that allowed no other deities, prohibited all other cults and closed the temples of Caesar and Augustus.

Remarkably will never *know* what Jesus looked like or wrote, as he himself has left us no books, statues, temples, or coins like the god Caesar and his son Augustus did. We can still read the ideas of those brilliant minds in their own words and look into their realistic faces via their marble portraits and touch the coins they designed.

While we can certainly *believe* in Jesus and the holy God, we will never *know* as much about them as this very coin tells us about Divus Julius and his son, Caesar Divi Filius, as a first hand witness.

Please share your thoughts (I hope I did not offend anybody's religious feelings, that was certainly not my intention), and coins of deified Romans!

* praetor: a judicial officer who had broad authority in cases of equity, was responsible for the production of the public games, and, in the absence of consuls, exercised extensive authority in the government.