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PUT ON THE BELT OF TRUTH

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth...” (Eph. 6:10-14). As beloved children of God, it is important to recognize we are now walking around with a target on our back for Satan to do his very best to strip us of our hope and

rob us of our inheritance. We must recognize temptations are going to be a regular part of life as faithful Christians and must therefore be fully clothed with the armor and protection God has given to us to overcome them. “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him,” (Jm. 1:12). One of the first pieces Paul admonishes us to have on is the belt of Truth. It was common for men and women to dress in long flowing robes and garments which would need to be tied up and fastened when swift movement or running was necessary. In this way, it is as if Paul is implying we need to live every day ready for swift action, having

our garments tied up with the belt of Truth and fully ready for an attack. We must always have a watchful eye in ready anticipation of Satan's devices being always ready to go to battle and be able to stand. "Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit," (Lk. 12:35). "Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ," (1 Pet. 1:13). "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour," (1 Pet. 5:8). One of the worst things to happen to someone in battle is to be caught off guard. There's nothing more devastating than a sneak attack when no one is prepared or ready to defend themselves. I have never experienced in all of my Christian life any battles with Satan that were pre-arranged where spectators could sit ring-side like a high-profile boxing match where the bell rings and we both go at each other. I don't get to have a date circled on the calendar in advance and have several weeks of training in preparation for the big

showdown. Since he sneaks up on us with no advance warning, Paul says we must always be dressed in readiness, tying up our loose flowing robes so we have freedom of movement to be ready for battle. For us, the loose flowing robes are not our clothing, but the loose flowing thoughts of our minds that need tightly held together with the Truth of the seriousness of our situation constantly dominating our thoughts. Paul says ultimately this is done through prayer. "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints," (Eph. 6:18). This is precisely what Jesus was trying to help His disciples understand on the night He was betrayed and arrested. When Jesus went to the garden for prayer bringing His disciples along with them, He urged them to stay vigilant in prayer in preparation for the temptations they would soon face. Being drowsy and falling asleep, their thoughts resembled the loose flowing robes they were wearing, and Jesus urges them to tie them up and be ready for action by engaging in fervent prayer.

People, Places, and Things of the **BIBLE**



HOW TAXES WERE COLLECTED UNDER KING MANASSEH (II Chronicles 33:1-20)

When Tax Day rolls around each year, taxpayers may take some small comfort in the fact that taxes are by no means a modern invention. Benjamin Franklin and Mark Twain both famously remarked about the certainty of death and taxes, and a recent archaeological discovery concerning ancient taxes in Jerusalem has added to scholars' certainty about a tax system in ancient Israel, especially during the reign of Judah's King Manasseh.

While wet sifting soil from the excavation of an ancient refuse pit on the eastern slope of the Temple Mount, workers at the Temple Mount Sifting Project discovered a small clay bulla, or seal impression, inscribed in paleo-Hebrew script. Although some of the letters had broken off, archaeologist and co-director of the sifting project Gabriel Barkay reconstructs the two lines of fragmentary paleo-Hebrew text to read "Gibeon, for the king." This puts the new find in a special group of more than 50 so-called fiscal bullae, but it is the first of these to come from a professional excavation; all of the previous examples are from the antiquities market (the Temple Mount Sifting Project subsequently discovered a second example while sifting soil from Ronny Reich and Eli Shukron's excavation near the Gihon Spring).

Unlike the "Gibeon, for the king." jar handles familiar to our readers, Barkay told *Biblical Archaeology Review* (BAR) by telephone that the fiscal bullae were not part of Hezekiah's administrative preparations for the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrian king Sennacherib in 701 B.C. Rather, he thinks the bullae are evidence for a system of ancient taxes used by Hezekiah's son and successor, King Manasseh, in the seventh century B.C.E. Barkay told BAR that under this system, "the urban administrative centers collected [ancient] taxes in kind [i.e., grain, oil, etc.] and then sent them on to the king in Jerusalem with the documentation attached and sealed by these bullae identifying where it had come from—in this case, Gibeon." At least 19 cities are identified in the paleo-Hebrew inscriptions on the fiscal bullae, representing nine of the 12 districts of Judah listed in Joshua 15:20–63. Barkay suggests that this Biblical passage may even have been composed for purposes of administering and collecting ancient taxes during the reign of King Manasseh.

King Manasseh was not popular with the Biblical authors (as Barkay puts it, "they hated his guts"), but Assyrian records suggest that he implemented heavy taxes on his people in order to pay tribute to King Esarhaddon and then King Ashurbanipal, Sennacherib's successors in Assyria. These ancient taxes thus helped King Manasseh maintain relative peace in Judah during his 55-year reign. Other evidence from the paleo-Hebrew inscribed fiscal bullae indicates that the city of Lachish was rebuilt during this time, as Barkay told BAR, 16 years after its destruction by Sennacherib's invading army.

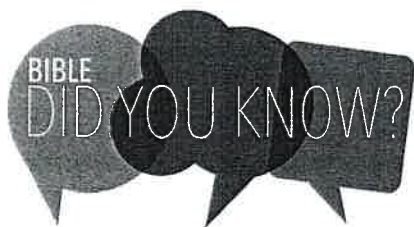
Proof once again that, when it comes to taxes, saving receipts is always a good idea.



Discovered during the Temple Mount Sifting Project, this seventh-century B.C.E. clay bulla inscribed in paleo-Hebrew script with the phrase "Gibeon, for the king" provides new evidence for how ancient taxes were collected during the reign of the Biblical King Manasseh.

“And He came out and proceeded as was His custom to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed Him. When He arrived at the place, He said to them, ‘Pray that you may not enter temptation.’ And He withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, saying, ‘Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.’ ...When He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, and said to them, ‘Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not enter into temptation,’” (Lk. 22:39-42,45-46). “...the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.’ Again He went away and prayed, saying the same words. And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. And He came the third time, and said to them, ‘Are you still sleeping and resting?’” (Mk. 14:38-41). The disciples failed to gird up the loins of their minds in fervent prayer in anticipation of the temptations they would face in remaining loyal to their teacher and friend that night,

and consequently were totally defenseless and unable to resist as they all fled and abandoned the Lord. Let us not make this same mistake when temptations come our way, as they are sure to come upon us. Let us gird up our minds with the belt of Truth and be ready in fervent prayer every day to meet Satan head on and have the strength to stand.
— Daniel Ruegg



The raven is the first bird mention in the Bible. It appears in Genesis 8:7, when it is sent out from the ark by Noah to see if the flood waters have abated. The second bird was a dove, in verse 8.

A chariot imported from Egypt cost around 600 shekels of silvers (1 Kgs. 10:29). That would be about \$77,000. One shekel was 4 days wages.