



## Sestertius depicting the head of Vespasian and Pax, the personification of peace (71 CE)

### Sestertius depicting the head of Vespasian and Pax, the personification of peace (71 CE)-obverse.jpg



[1]

### [Sestertius depicting the head of Vespasian and Pax, the personification of peace \(71 CE\)-reverse.jpg](#) [2]



[3]

**Denomination:**

Sestertius

**Date:** 71 CE

**Material:**

Bronze

**Mint:**

Rome

**Actual Location (Collection/Museum):** American Numismatic Society

Id: [1905.57.309](#) [4]

**Name of Ruler:**

Vespasian

**Obverse (Image and Inscription):**

Image: Laureate head of Vespasian looking right

Inscription: IMP CAES VESPASIAN AUG P M TR P P P COS III

**Reverse (Image and Inscription):**

Image: Pax standing left, holding branch and cornucopiae; SC in exergue



Inscription: PAX AUGUSTI

**Diameter (mm):** 35.00mm

**Weight (g):** 26.73g

**Commentary:**

RIC II/1<sup>2</sup>, no. 181, p. 72.

The obverse of this sestertius minted in 71 CE depicts the head of Vespasian, while the reverse depicts Pax, the goddess or the personification of peace. The inscription on the obverse refers to Vespasian as *imperator*, Caesar, Augustus, *pontifex maximus*, or high priest of the Roman state religion, *pater patriae*, or father of the fatherland, and mentions the fact that he held the consulship for the third time. In 71 CE, Vespasian held the consulship together with the future emperor Nerva.

Pax, who was identified with the Greek goddess Eir<sup>η</sup>, was the goddess of peace. She was generally depicted with olive branches and a cornucopia. The latter attribute emphasized abundance or prosperity, one of the most important benefits of peace. *Pax*, or peace, was one of the most important benefits that the emperor could bestow on his subjects. Therefore, the inscription on the reverse, *Pax Augusti*, emphasizes that the granting of *Pax* to the empire's citizens and subjects was the result of the personal action of the emperor. Carlos Noreña emphasizes that *Pax* had a dual meaning for the Romans. *Pax* could stand for the absence of civil wars as well as for the *Pax Romana*, or the peace imposed by the Romans on conquered peoples (Noreña, *Imperial Ideals*, p. 127-128).

In 71 CE, Vespasian had much to celebrate, in particular the return of peace. Indeed the beginning of his rule brought the return of peace after three years of civil wars, the quelling of the rebellion in Judea, and various other disturbances on the Western borders of the empire, such as the Batavian rebellion of Gaius Julius Civilis in 69 CE. It is precisely in that context that he decided to start the building of the *Templum Pacis*, the Temple of Peace. This temple had been vowed in 71 CE following Vespasian and Titus's successful campaign in Judea. It was built inside the Forum of Vespasian and subsequently inaugurated four years later, in 75 CE (see [The Temple of Peace \(Rome\)](#) [5]). Therefore, *Pax* on this coin corresponds to the end of the civil wars, the taming of various rebellions, and the restoration of the *Pax Romana*.

Keywords in the original language:

- [pax Augusti](#) [6]
- [Caesar](#) [7]
- [Augustus](#) [8]
- [imperator](#) [9]
- [consul](#) [10]
- [pontifex maximus](#) [11]
- [tribunicia potestas](#) [12]
- [pater patriae](#) [13]

Thematic keywords:

- [Vespasian](#) [14]
- [peace](#) [15]
- [Pax Romana](#) [16]
- [Roman peace](#) [17]
- [cornucopia](#) [18]
- [branch](#) [19]

**Bibliographical references:** Noreña, Carlos F., [Imperial Ideals in the Roman West: Representation, Circulation, Power](#) [20] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

Levick, Barbara, [Vespasian](#) [21] (Roman Imperial Biographies ; London: Routledge, 2005)

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Other sources connected with this document: Architecture

## [The Temple of Peace \(Rome\)](#) [5]

- [Read more about The Temple of Peace \(Rome\)](#) [5]

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- [2] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/file/sestertius-depicting-head-vespasian-and-pax-personification-peace-71-ce-reverse.jpg>
- [3] [http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/sites/default/files/styles/large/public/default2\\_0.jpg?itok=MfQDAF8V](http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/sites/default/files/styles/large/public/default2_0.jpg?itok=MfQDAF8V)
- [4] <http://numismatics.org/collection/1905.57.309>
- [5] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/temple-peace-rome>
- [6] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/keywords/pax-augusti>
- [7] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/keywords/caesar>
- [8] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/keywords/augustus>
- [9] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/keywords/imperator>
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- [18] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/thematic-keywords/cornucopia>
- [19] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/thematic-keywords/branch>
- [20] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/imperial-ideals-roman-west-representation-circulation-power>
- [21] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/vespasian>
- [22] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/erc-team/samuele-rocca>