



**FESTIVAL of ISIS, Mid 4th century AD. Æ 15mm. VERY RARE, NOT LISTED IN RIC.**

**FESTIVAL of ISIS**, Mid 4th century AD. Æ-4 (15mm, 1.2g). **DE IS I DI**, draped bust of Isis right, wearing hem-hem crown. / **VOTA P-VBLICA**, Isis standing left, holding sistrum and caduceus?. **VERY RARE, NOT LISTED IN RIC.** ---. Good VF, black patina, minor roughness. \$895.00 (Roy's Coins-on VCOINS)



d=40 mm

Medallion circa 189, æ 73.11 g. IMP COMMODVS AVG PIVS FELIX Laureate, draped and cuirassed bust r. Rev. VOTIS FELICIBVS Commodus, veiled, sacrificing at tripod placed at the entrance of a harbour towards which five vessels are approaching; a priest standing by the tripod accompanies the Emperor. On r., a pharos and beneath, on the sea-shore, a slain bull. C. 996. Gneccchi pag. 71, 175 and pl. 89, 7. H. Gruber, Roman medallions in the B.M., p. 30, 44 and pl. XXXV, 3. BMC p. Clxxxiii.

The reverse shows a harbor scene with four commercial vessels and one naval galley encompassing a scene of the emperor, with attendant, sacrificing over an altar before a lighthouse, beneath which is a fallen bull, a victim of sacrifice. The largest vessel, which bears Serapis, is an exact match for commercial ships depicted on mosaics of Tunis now in the Sousse Museum. This remarkable composition inspired later medallions of Diocletian. Commodus rightly feared a grain shortage in the city of Rome, as history showed grain was the 'Achilles Heel' of metropolitan Rome. Shipments from Egypt might be disrupted for any number of reasons – poor inundation of the Nile, a bad sailing season, or even a strategic maneuver by a rival. Perhaps better than any emperor before or after, Commodus understood the mentality and the demands of the mob. Commodus knew that his personal indulgences and longevity depended on appeasement of the mob, which needed to be fed and entertained. Alföldi, Mattingly and Tonybee all agree this medallion was struck for the annual **Festival of Isis** (the *navigium Isidis*) in Rome, an especially favorable view since that event was closely connected with New Year's rituals – the very occasions for which so many medallions were struck. Further, the lighthouse very strongly resembles the pharos of Alexandria, and the main vessel bears Serapis.