

## SHEPHERDS and WISE MEN

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The key events of Christianity were the primary focus of art in Europe for many centuries. Artists used a variety of different approaches in their many illustrations of the Christmas story. The birth of Christ, adoration of the shepherds, and the arrival of the wise men were standard subjects. We'll look at paintings from Gothic through Baroque eras to sample many different interpretations. Shepherds will make their appearance in the first class. The wise men will arrive for the second one followed by a look at contemporary Epiphany celebrations.

**SHEPHERDS** – Luke 2:8-20 (King James Version)

### ***Annunciation to the Shepherds:***

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men.

### ***Adoration of the Shepherds:***

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." And they came with haste and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they has seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

Lectionary of Henry II, Annunciation to the Shepherds, 1002-41  
Annunciation, Chartres Cathedral, Incarnation Window, Annunciation, c. 1150  
Giotto, Adoration of the Shepherds & Nativity, Arena Chapel, Padua, 1305-6  
Duccio, Adoration & Nativity, Maestá Altarpiece, Siena, 1308-11  
Gaddi, Annunciation, Capella Baroncelli, Santa Croce, Florence, c. 1330  
Van der Goes, Adoration, Portinari Altarpiece, Uffizi, c. 1476  
Ghirlandaio, Adoration, Santa Trinita, Florence, 1485  
Van der Goes, Adoration, Berlin, 1480  
Giorgione, Adoration, NGA, 1505-10  
Tintoretto, Nativity and Shepherds, San Rocco, Venice, 1578-81  
Dürer, Adoration woodcut, c. 1503  
El Greco, Adoration, Prado, c. 1612-14  
Caravaggio, Adoration, Messina, 1609  
Murillo, Adoration, Madrid, c. 1650  
    + Hermitage, 1646-50  
La Tour, Adoration, Louvre, 1645

**WISE MEN** – Matthew 2:1-12 (King James Version)

***Journey of the Magi:***

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying “Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all of Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, “In Bethlehem of Judaea, for thus it is written by the prophet: And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah, for out of thee shall come a governor that shall rule my people Israel.” And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, “Go and search diligently for the young child and when ye have found him bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.” When they had heard the king, they departed; and lo, the same star which they saw in the east, went before them, until it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

### ***Adoration of the Magi:***

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him, and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

### **EPIPHANY**

While the word “epiphany” comes from the Greek word meaning “to appear,” for the western Christian church, the holiday celebrates the visit of the wise men also called Magi. The Magi represented the non-Jewish peoples of the world, therefore, a "revelation to the gentiles."

Giselbertus, Adoration of the Magi, Autun Cathedral, France, 1125-35

Journey of Magi, Chartres Cathedral, Incarnation Window, c. 1150

Giotto, Adoration of the Magi, Arena Chapel, 1305-6

Duccio, Adoration, Maestá, 1308-11

Gentile da Fabriano, Adoration, Uffizi, 1423

Gozzoli, Journey of the Magi, Medici Chapel, Florence, c. 1459-61

Botticelli, Adoration, Uffizi, 1475-6

+ Adoration, NGA, 1478-82

Van der Goes, Monforte Altarpiece, Berlin, c. 1470

Unknown Flemish, Adoration, Prayer Book of Mary Queen of Scots, 15<sup>th</sup> C.

Rubens, Magi Portraits, Puerto Rico, Antwerp and NGA, 1618

+ Adoration, Prado, 1628

Rembrandt, Adoration, Rome, 1632-3

Burne-Jones, Adoration, Manchester, 1894

### **Contemporary Epiphany Celebrations**

Florence

Rome

Venice