

Last Judgment

The Heavenly Kingdom

Christ the Judge is represented in majesty, with his right arm raised in a gesture of wrath and malediction of the wicked, and the left extended in benevolence toward the good. His naked and beardless figure, which is reminiscent of the classical models of Jupiter hurling thunderbolts and Apollo, looks more like an ancient god than the Christ the Judge of the Christians, who had until then always been depicted seated on a throne and in an essentially static pose: this figure alone required ten «days» of fresco and bears the marks of various retouches.

The Madonna, in an attitude that makes her look almost fearful of divine power, is depicted, according to some critics, with the features of Vittoria Colonna and, with allusive significance, is echoing the gesture of Eve in the scene of the *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden* on the ceiling.

Great prominence is given to the figures of two saints underneath, St Lawrence with the grid on which he was roasted and St Bartholomew, who was martyred by being flayed alive and is therefore depicted holding his own skin, in which Michelangelo painted a dramatic self portrait. It has been claimed that this saint was given the appearance of Pietro Aretino in reference to the humiliation that the writer inflicted on Michelangelo by his harsh condemnation of the naked figures in the *Judgment*.

Other figures include St John the Baptist, St Peter with the keys, St Paul, St Sebastian with the arrows, and the group depicting St Blaise with the iron combs that were used to torture him and St Catherine of Alexander stretched on the spiked wheel. The last two figures were extensively modified by Daniele da Volterra who turned St Blaise's head so that it faced backward and clothed St Catherine, previously completely nude.