

Ceiling of the Sistine Chapel

Pendentives

The four pendentives in the corners of the ceiling represent the *Virtues* in the form of famous scenes from the Bible. They are, however, unusual in the choice of the moment depicted. In the *David*, for example, it is the actual combat that is represented and not, as was customary, the moment of triumph with the head of Goliath. Examples of mature and balanced composition, it is likely that the pendentives were painted in the final period of work.

Judith and Holophernes

(Apocryphal Book of Judith, XIII) The young widow of Betulia flees with the severed head of Holophernes, in which some have seen a self portrait of the artist.

David and Goliath

(I. Samuel, XVII, 51) Here is the central moment of the famous story that is represented, when the giant is beheaded. The faces of soldiers can be seen in the background, looking on from behind the drape.

The Brazen Serpent

(Numbers, XXI, 4) The story of the journey of the people of Israel to the Promised Land was represented as a reference to the struggle of humanity against its fate. The combination of man and serpent made a citation of the recently discovered Laocoön indispensable. Strangely, Moses, who plays the leading role in this episode, does not appear.

Punishment of Haman

(Esther, III-VII) Three episodes are depicted simultaneously: Ahasuerus sending for Mordecai to reward him, the advice leading to Haman's sentencing, and the latter on the cross. The complexity of the scene has led scholars to propose numerous variants and to attribute symbolic meanings to them.