



December 28
Festival: The Holy Innocents

In Matthew's account, magi from the east go to Judea in search of the newborn king of the Jews, having "seen his star in the east". They are directed to Bethlehem, and Herod asks them to let him know who this king is when they find him. They find Jesus and honor him, but an angel tells them not to alert Herod, and they return home by another way.

The Massacre of the Innocents is at Matthew 2:16-18, although the preceding verses form the context:

When [the Magi] had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. Get up, he said, take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him. So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son." When Herod realised that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: "A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."

Matthew's purpose is to present Jesus as the Messiah, and the Massacre of the Innocents as the fulfillment of passages in Hosea, referring to the exodus, and Jeremiah, to the Babylonian exile.

The Massacre of the Innocents by Giotto. 1304-1306.