

Lesson 19

Transfiguration of Our Lord

The Holy Gospel: Matthew 17:1–9

“After six days” ties what follows with what went before—Matthew’s telling of Peter’s great confession of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, which Jesus followed immediately by beginning to explain that He was to “go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders, chief priests and scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised.” That was surprise enough! But then Jesus added other words they didn’t expect to hear: A disciple would have to “deny himself and take up his cross” and find life by losing it for his Master! After all of that, the disciples were surely in need of a lift in their outlook, so “after six days,” Jesus gave the inner circle just that. He let them see Him in His transfigured glory.

Tour guides in Palestine today point to Mount Tabor, near Nazareth in Galilee, as the Mount of Transfiguration. This tradition is of long standing and may be accurate, but the preceding events took place in the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi, some twenty-five miles north of the Sea of Galilee, at the base of Mount Hermon. The site of the transfiguration may have been one of the higher foothills of Mount Hermon.

272. Why was this privilege of seeing Jesus’ transfiguration limited to Peter, James, and John?

273. Why was Jesus’ divine glory displayed as bright light? (See 1 Timothy 6:15b–16 and Revelation 1:13–15.)

274. What is the significance of the appearance of Moses and Elijah as part of Jesus’ display of glory? In his Gospel, Luke said they talked about what was ahead for Jesus in Jerusalem. What was God’s purpose for the disciples in having this conversation be part of Jesus’ transfiguration?

Peter, true to his impetuous nature, offered to erect three shelters—probably with the idea of enshrining and perpetuating the wonderful experience. Both Mark and Luke indicate that Peter was just talking, without knowing what he was saying. Sometimes silence is the best response to a situation that is clothed in mystery.

“A bright cloud overshadowed them.” Clouds were associated in Scripture with many manifestations of the presence of God. Sample some: Exodus 13:21–22; 19:16–19; 24:15–18; 1 Kings 8:10–13; Acts 1:9; and Matthew 24:30–31. From the cloud came the voice that underscored the purpose of the entire event.

275. Note the three parts of what the Father said from heaven. What is the significance of each of them?