

The Holy Monastery of Mount Tabor

Mount Tabor, Itabyrium in Graeco-Roman, stands in the centre of Galilee, between the Jezreel Valley and Scythopolis (modern Beit She 'an). Mount Tabor is referenced in the Psalms in the Old Testament; "Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in Thy name" (Psalm 89:12). It is also mentioned in Joshua (19:16-17) as the border between the Zebulun and Issachar tribes and as the assembly place of the sons of Israel under the command of Barak and Deborah before the battle against Sisera (Judges 4:6). There is no direct mention of the Mount in the New Testament. It is however implied as the Mount of the Transfiguration of the Lord through Apostle Peter's words "in sacred mount", "when the voice came to Him saying... "This is my Son whom I love; in Him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with Him on the sacred mountain" (2 Peter 1:17-18). Despite the absence of direct mention of the mount in the New Testament, an ancient Church tradition and belief links the Transfiguration of the Lord with Mount Tabor. The Lord left the rest of His disciples at the foot of the mountain and took with Him to the top the three notable ones, Peter, James and John. There, unexpectedly "the fashion of his countenance was altered and his raiment was white and glistering" (Luke 9:29), and Moses and Elias appeared and talked with him about his sacrificial death in Jerusalem, and Peter proposed to construct three tents and stay on the mountain, while a bright cloud overshadowed them and a voice from it was heard saying; "This is my beloved Son: hear him" (Luke 9:28-36). According to the Fathers of the Church, The Lord presented His notable disciples – and consequently the Church – with the magnificent countenance of His face, in order to prepare and strengthen them for the mysteries of the Cross and His Resurrection, as well as a reminder of the glory of the created man before the

fall which can be regained through faith and communion with Him. It is through Him that the repulsive raiment of the passions of the soul are abolished, replaced by the garments of virtual splendour, decency and graciousness. In this Transfiguration are the Lord's believers called and which was witnessed by the Church Fathers, who like the Apostles gazed at the Glory of the Lord according to their potential, through the experience of the Uncreated Light of His face. The splendid Church of the Transfiguration, which was constructed above the ruins of a former Byzantine church of the time of the memorable Patriarch of Jerusalem Cyril (1865), is located on top of Mount Tabor. The interior walls have been recently ordained with frescoes of fine Byzantine art.

Mount Tabor, the Mount of the Transfiguration

Mount Tabor is a massive cone-shaped mountain at the north of the valley Esdraelon. The origin of the name comes from the Semitic, meaning height, mountain or navel. Mount Tabor has been associated with the "High Mountain" on which the Transfiguration of Christ took place. During the 6th century there were three churches on the mountain top in correspondence to the three tents mentioned by Peter. During that time, Tabor was proclaimed Archdiocese and attracted many Christian monks and thousands of pilgrims. During the Crusades Benedictine and Greek monks inhabited Tabor. After the expulsion of the Crusaders from the Holy Land in 1211, the Damascus Sultan Michael el-Adil destroyed all Christian buildings, erecting above their ruins a sturdy fortress; its ruins are still visible in various places on the mountain. Nowadays, the top of Mount Tabor is a Christian property owned by Greek Orthodox and Latin monks. On the south part there is the Greek Orthodox monastery, the Church of the Transfiguration built in 1862, and Mechisedek's chapel, while on the north side there is the Franciscan monastery and guest house as well as a magnificent Basilica built above the ruins of an ancient Byzantine Church.