



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF ATLANTA

## HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN ALEXIOS` REFLECTIONS ON THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

5/20/2009

*"O Christ, having taken upon thy shoulders our nature, which had gone astray, thou didst ascend and bring it unto God the Father."*

*(Matins canon for the Ascension)*

Next week we will observe one of the twelve great Feast Days of our Church: the Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord, the last day of His physical presence on Earth. We believe that in his resurrected body, Christ lived among the disciples for 40 days but He did not return to His former life. He does not even stay with them, but only appears at various times and places, always miraculously and mysteriously. "He was not always with them now, as He was before the Resurrection," as St John Chrysostom says.

The Ascension marks the fulfillment of God's plan, and reveals the full meaning of Christ's Resurrection, because with Christ, we also ascend. "We who seemed unworthy of the earth, are now raised to heaven," says St John Chrysostom. "We who were unworthy of earthly dominion have been raised to the Kingdom on high, have ascended higher than heaven, have come to occupy the King`s throne, and the same nature from which the angels guarded Paradise, stopped not until it ascended to the throne of the Lord." By His Ascension the Lord opened for us the way to Heaven.

St. Luke tells us that our Lord "led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven." This sight was so amazing, even to the Apostles who had witnessed all manner of strange and miraculous events, that they stood there, transfixed, gazing up after Him, until rebuked by angels: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11) Thus we understand that The Ascension is also a promise of His Second Coming.

Like the Apostles, we also stand in awe, looking up after our Ascended Lord, and wondering what we should do from then on. However St. John Chrysostom has an answer for us, "If thou art the body of Christ, bear the Cross."

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