

**“AND HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN . . .”**

Forty days after His Resurrection, Christ, having accomplished His divine work, took His Apostles to the Mount of Olives, and after bidding them farewell, ascended into Heaven. Have you ever wondered why our Lord chose to leave us? He showed His power over death and the forces of evil . . . Why didn't He simply remain among His people here on earth? As always, if we search the Scriptures and study the texts of our liturgical services, we find the answers to these questions.

In *John 16:7*, we hear Jesus telling His followers: **“It is to your advantage that I go away, for it I do not, the comforter will not come to you.”** One of the sticheras at Vespers on the eve of the Feast Day of the Ascension simply proclaims: **“The Lord ascended into Heaven so that he could send the Holy Spirit into the world.”** Our Divine Saviour saw that His mission on earth was accomplished. He became Incarnate so that He could preach the Gospel to the world, directing mankind along the path of salvation and redemption. Through His Crucifixion and Resurrection, all of this became a reality. Thus, the Lord ascended to His Heavenly Father so that the Holy Spirit could descend upon us, enlightening us and strengthening us in the process.

It can also be said that Christ ascended into Heaven to intercede for us before God's Heavenly Throne. **“I go to prepare a place for you. And when I go, I will return and take you to Myself, that where I am, you may also be.”** (*John 14:2-3*). St. Paul expresses similar sentiments in his letter to the Hebrews: **“Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.”** (*Heb. 9:24*). *These words should fill us all with hope and assurance.*