*Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, His praise in the assembly of the faithful. Let Israel be glad in its Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King. Let them praise His name with dancing, making melody to Him with tambourine and lyre. For the Lord takes pleasure in His people; He adorns the humble with victory. Let the faithful exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their couches. Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands, to execute vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples, to bind their kings with fetters and their nobles with chains of iron, to execute on them the judgment decreed. This is glory for all His faithful ones.* Psalm 149

*The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: “This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn with fire. This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand, and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the Passover of the Lord. I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, from human to animal, and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. “This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance*. Exodus 12:1-14

 *A little girl pointed to the Bible on the never opened laying on the mantle and asked mom: "Whose book is that?"*

 *Her mother quite startled by the daughters question replied: "Why honey, don't you know? That is God's book!"*

 *Showing that she had a very practical mind the little girl turns to her mom and says: "Don't you think that we had better give it back to Him? No one around here ever reads it."*

This was to be a joke, unfortunately too often this is the reality, even in Christian homes.

Worship Service, What Exactly Is It?

1. When the angel of death *“passed over*” the homes of the Hebrews in Egypt, he did not enter through the door marked with the blood of a slain lamb. Ever since that night, the blood of the lamb was regarded as a visible symbol of salvation. Although the animal sacrifice was practiced even before the first Passover, the night of the Exodus signifies a very special meaning to the expression *“the* *blood of the lamb.”* This was also the institution of the most important tradition in Judaism, the *“Passover.”* Ever since that night, the *“Passover”* was to be celebrated annually in a form of remembrance and celebrated first at home, then in the Tabernacle, and eventually in the Temple. Every time the lamb was slain as a sacrifice spilling the blood, that sacrifice symbolized salvation from the slavery and the cruelty of bondage in Egypt.

2. Although this sacrifice was eventually officially performed in the Temple according to the rules spelled out by the *“Torah,”* the true understanding of it over the years has lost its true meaning, and became an important but somehow a common occurrence, a routine rather than meaningful celebration. Eventually, although people would offer a sacrifice to atone for their sins, they would then commit the same ones again, and again. What happened on the night of Christ sacrificial death, put an end to such misconception of God’s intentions, and brought the only true, meaningful and straightforward solution to the problem of our disobedience to God. Jesus’ death as much undeserved as it was necessary to fulfill God’s requirements, opened the door to the form of celebration we refer to as the *“Worship Service.”*

3. In Malachi 1:10b God said: *“I am not pleased with you and I will accept no offering from your hands."* This is not the only time when the Bible speaks about God rejecting the sacrifices from His people. The reason for the rejection was simple. Instead of offering what was to be the best, people were offering what they had to spare, and what was already blemished. The sacrifice lost its true meaning and became just another ritual. In the eyes of God there is no need and no place for any ritual. David said it best in his unforgettable Psalm 51: *“The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not reject.”* Dying on the cross Jesus was the perfect *“sacrificial Lamb.”* He was the sacrifice God fully accepted and through Jesus’ sacrifice our sins were truly and fully forgiven.

4. Every time we gather together for Worship Service, we do not come here because this is the *“ritual,”* we do not come here because this is expected of us. We are here to truly Worship our God, to remember the sacrifice of Jesus, and to remember that this is the time when we truly ask God for guidance, for protection and for His blessing. Unfortunately, there are also many of those who do not see the Worship Service as something extraordinary, and treat this as a casual, spare and blemished offering. One of the reasons our churches are empty today, is because many Christians forgot what this time is all about. In other words, many people take the Worship Service for granted, something they will participate at in their spare time. People forget that we are here to commemorate the death of Jesus Christ. What is the most tragic, is that people stopped realize that He died for ours, not for His sins. Worship Service enables us to understand that we were unable to save ourselves on our own, that Jesus had to die and in doing so He handed us the keys to the eternal life. In the Worship Service we actively accept them from Him.

5. Our Worship Service is the celebration of Jesus’ death as well as His Resurrection, because His death without His resurrection would be meaningless. Every time we come to Worship, we recall God’s saving acts, and we rejoice because we are free, free from the slavery, from the bondage of sin, free from the Satan’s domain. When we forget the reasons for gathering here, we truly miss the proverbial *“boat.”*  What is the Worship Service? It is the commemoration of Jesus’ sacrifice and His death on the cross of Calvary. In the Worship Service we offer ourselves to Him as the *“living sacrifices”* Paul writes about in the letter to the Romans. As we gather for the Worship Service, we proclaim God’s Grace, God’s love for us. As we gather for the Worship Service, we recall His care and blessings bestowed on us every day. That’s what the Worship Service is, and this is why the Worship Service is the powerful and a meaningful experience. It is definitely not the casual gathering at the spare of the moment and just because we are required to be here.

6. In the Worship Service we remember that the events of the *“Good Friday”* do not have to be repeated, what was to be done was done, once and for all. But we must commemorate this event. We must remember, *“lest we forget.”* Unfortunately, the Hebrews who were to remember the night when Moses, guided by God led them out of Egypt, eventually did forget and just as many Christians forgot what our Worship Service is all about. In the Worship Service we do not have to bring our sacrifices anymore, but we accept Jesus’ ultimate sacrifice and rejoice, because we received what we needed, and the certainty of our future is clearly laid before us. We remember that it was God’s Grace that offered us the chance which we were unable to reach for on our own, and this Grace brought us hope that keeps us going through our life here on earth.

7. What God does not want from us is the casual understanding of what the Worship Service is all about. Some people believe that the Worship Service is the time of somber reflection because this is nearly a form of the *“memorial service,”* but I believe that the Worship Service serves a dual purpose. Yes, there is a reverence and somberness, but there is also joy and happiness, because the Good Friday and the Easter Sunday are combined into one celebration. In the Passover there was the somberness of death of all the firstborn in Egypt, but there was also joy because the Hebrews were leaving their enslavement. In our Worship we do the same. We recall the death of Jesus, and this is the solemn time, but we also rejoice, because He rose from the dead, assuring us of the same. If the events of the Good Friday were not followed by the events of the Resurrection Sunday, our Worship would most probably be very different, but because we know what followed, we have God’s assurance, and our Worship is indeed a happy and a joyous celebration.

8. Do *“not neglect to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encourage one another,”* writes the author of the letter to the Hebrews, and his words serve as a clear reminder that what we see more and more in many churches is a pure and simple neglect on the part of a large portion of the Christian community. When we neglect the Worship Service, we neglect God, and when we neglect God, we once again brake off the relationship with Him, one that was re-established by Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary.