

Resolving the Passover Controversy

Part 2

A Critique of Fred Coulter's Book: *The Christian Passover*

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Following the initial completion of my first paper about the Passover controversy, I was asked to look at Fred Coulter's book, *The Christian Passover*, which was originally published in 1993 and revised in 1999. While I do not intend to repeat here everything I have previously covered, this book raises several issues that I did not address and contains some fundamental errors that should not go unanswered.

The second edition of Mr. Coulter's book is over 500 pages long. It claims to prove during roughly the first quarter that the Passover in Egypt occurred at the beginning of the 14th of Abib. In the second quarter, it attempts to show that over the years the Passover observance was moved from the 14th to the 15th. Coulter also tries to explain here how the Passover, which he feels was always meant to be observed at home, came to be observed at the temple. The final half of the book discusses the Passover in the New Testament. Most of the material added to the original 300-page first edition is in this "New Testament" section.

There are many erroneous claims made in this book, which can often be traced to the first chapter where 14 rules for Bible study are given (pp.15-16 second edition / p.13 first edition). Most of these rules are good. But some of them can result in misleading studies because the rules are incomplete.

One very important guideline that is **not** included in this set of rules is that we should ***study all of the verses on a given subject before drawing a conclusion***. This is where rule #1 (begin with Scriptures that are easy to understand) and rule #11 (base your study on Scriptural knowledge that you already understand, which was rule #12 in the first edition) cause so much trouble. Mr. Coulter picks out what he decides are the easy Scriptures, draws a conclusion, and refuses to allow the possibility that other Scriptures could indicate that the original conclusion was faulty. As a result, the book takes an approach used frequently by proponents of heretical doctrines: A relatively few verses are used in an attempt to prove the premise; then the remainder of the presentation seeks to explain why

all of the verses in the Bible that seem to contradict the original conclusion really do not. When there are just a few seemingly contradictory Scriptures in the midst of many others that are very, very clear, this may be appropriate and necessary. But when these "difficult" Scriptures involve many verses, even large sections of Scripture, perhaps it would be more appropriate to re-examine those few original "easy" verses to see if something has been misunderstood.

Keeping the Passover

Fred Coulter's first point of discussion is over the meaning of the name "Passover" (p.17/15). Most arguments presented are fine, but the conclusion contains a fundamental, unproven concept: that the term "Passover" was originally the name of a 24-hour ***day*** in which he feels the lambs were slain, the meal was eaten and the destroyer passed over. The book then refers frequently to this "Passover day", and builds many doctrinal "proofs" based on this concept. In fact, the Scriptures never speak of a "Passover day". Rather, the Passover is a ***sacrifice*** to be offered at a particular time ***on*** a given day (cf. Exodus 12:11; 2 Chronicles 35:1,6). The term "Passover" is also used in Scripture to refer to the accompanying seven-day feast (Ezekiel 45:21; Luke 22:1), but it is never actually called a "day" in the Bible.

Next is a discussion of what it means to "keep the Passover" (p.19/17). Mr. Coulter's first conclusion here is that everything the Israelites did at the first Passover had to be repeated for all succeeding Passovers — that the instructions for that first Passover were the statutes and ordinances for

succeeding Passovers, to be kept unchanged. Nine rules for keeping the Passover are cited (p.20/18), derived from Exodus 12. But if *all* of the original Passover instructions were to be observed, several were left out of this list. For example, Exodus 12:11 states the Passover was to be eaten in haste, “*with* a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand.” Verse 22 says no one should leave the house where the Passover was eaten until morning (defined by Coulter as daylight). These rules were just as much a part of the original Passover, and if Coulter is correct that no ordinances were changed, there is no reason why these regulations should not have continued also. However, they would present a major problem to the book’s thesis if they had been included. Coulter is trying to demonstrate that Jesus and His disciples were keeping this very Passover with all of its unchanged rituals. Yet clearly their reclining eating style was not conducive to a hasty meal, they were certainly not wearing their sandals throughout, and they not only left the house before daylight, it appears they left long before midnight, before even the broadest meaning of the word “morning”.

Coulter then decides that it was not sufficient to just begin the process at the appointed time, but all of the elements of the first Passover had to be completed on the one **day** he has defined as being called the Passover. He finishes chapter two with a brief discussion of the Hebrew words for “keep”, “kill”, and “eat” (pp.22-23/20-21), and concludes that to “keep” the Passover included not only killing the animal, but eating it as well. Therefore it is his contention that to “keep” the Passover on the 14th required both killing and eating the Passover on the 14th. The last sentence reads: “In the next chapter, we will undertake a detailed study of the Hebrew terms that God used to specify the commanded time for the killing of the lambs and the eating of the Passover” (p.23 / similar to first edition, p.21).

In chapter three, therefore, he proceeds to identify this commanded time for the Passover as *ben ha-arbayim* (between the two evenings). Then he quotes from Numbers 9:1-3 (pp.25-26/23) showing that the Passover was to be “kept” during that time. Verses 3, 5 and 11 all say the Passover was to be “kept” during this “between the evenings”

time frame. If “keep” means all of the attendant rituals, including eating the lamb, as he so dogmatically stated in chapter two, and “between the evenings” means twilight (as he claims), then the Israelites had a maximum of 90 minutes to slay, roast, eat and burn the remains of a whole lamb — clearly (as detailed later in his book) an impossible task.

The Hebrew word translated “keep” (*‘asah*) is one of the most common words in the Bible, used over 2600 times. Its primary meaning is “to do” or “to make” as in “Noah **did** according to all that the LORD commanded him” (Genesis 7:5) and “God **made** the firmament” (Genesis 1:7). In addition to “observe, keep or accomplish” (the only meanings acknowledged by Mr. Coulter), *‘asah* can also have the meaning “prepare” as in Numbers 15:8: “And when you **prepare** a young bull as a burnt offering....” *‘Asah* is also the word used in Esther 5:4,5,12; 6:14 to describe the banquet Esther “had prepared”. Obviously, she had not consumed the banquet before her guests arrived. It is apparent that the Passover offering was *prepared* “between the evenings”, but it could not have been eaten until several hours later, after the roasting was complete — well beyond the “between the evenings” time frame, regardless of whether the lambs were slain during twilight or in the middle of the afternoon. The Passover was “kept” (*‘asah*, made or prepared) *ben ha-arbayim*, and eaten after that time had ended; the Passover lambs were *prepared on the 14th*, as instructed, but there is no Scripture which says they were eaten on the 14th.

By this point in his book, Mr. Coulter is working on the premise (without proof) that the 14th of Abib should be called the “Passover day”, and he seems to feel he has proven the Passover had to be observed “domestically” with all of the original accompanying ceremonies (or at least the ones he picked out) entirely during the 14th. Although he has proven no such thing, he proceeds as though this was now an indisputable fact, interpreting other Scriptures as necessary, and dismissing as obviously wrong any historic sources which oppose it.

Time Expressions

In chapter three, Mr. Coulter begins a discussion of the differences between *ben ha-arbayim* (between the two evenings) and *ba-‘erev* (at evening). It is claimed in the first edition that *Strong’s Exhaustive*

Concordance does not list these concepts separately, and that “*Ba erev IS A TOTALLY DIFFERENT WORD, WITH A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT MEANING!*” (p.22, emphasis his). This is a bit of an exaggeration, and the second edition backs down somewhat, but still maintains that, “The two phrases have COMPLETELY DIFFERENT MEANINGS” (pp.24-25). Actually, *Strong’s* lists *arbayim* and ‘*erev* together because they really are just different forms of the same word. *Arbayim* is a plural (the duo-plural form) of ‘*erev* (or “*ereb*” as *Strong’s* prefers to transliterate it). The distinction between “at evening” and “between the evenings” is wanting in the KJV, but it can usually be found in *Strong’s* by looking at the source of the word “at”. In those verses where “at even” should have been translated “between the evenings”, *Strong’s* shows that the word “at” was translated from *beyn* or *ben* (#996, “between”). *Strong’s* is admittedly not an easy reference for studying this topic, but it does illustrate that the expressions “at evening” and “between the evenings” are not necessarily as “completely different” as Fred Coulter would like us to believe.

Coulter’s book has a tendency to define words in a very restrictive manner, using only a few Scriptural examples as proof, even though other Scriptures do not support these limited definitions. Beginning on page 34 (p.31, first edition), for example, Leviticus 23 is used to define “at evening” (*ba-‘erev*). Based on Leviticus 23:32 *alone*, the conclusion is made that “at evening” is *always* used for the precise end of a day (the exact moment of sunset). It is interesting to note that Deuteronomy 16:6 and Joshua 5:10 use this same term in describing the time of the Passover, which would therefore (using solely this definition) place it at the moment of sunset at the **end** of the 14th. Faced with this problem, Coulter decides that these two passages cannot be referring to the Passover, but rather to the first day of Unleavened Bread, despite the fact that the Passover is what these verses claim to be speaking about (See pages 169-170, first edition. In the second edition, pages 187-189, Coulter changes his mind and decides Joshua 5:10 may be the Passover after all, but that in this case *ba-‘erev* must mean the beginning of the day.)

In the first edition of his book, Mr. Coulter made little differentiation between “*erev*” and “*ba-‘erev*”,

so in the second edition he makes this clarification: “Its [‘*erev*] specific meaning depends on the context in which it is used and the form in which it appears in the text. When used with the preposition *ba*, *erev* specifically refers to sunset” (p.35). He still offers no further proof than Leviticus 23:32. *Ba* is a preposition which is usually translated “at” or “in”. It does not magically transform the word for “evening” into “sunset”, however, as an examination of Judges 19:14-16 will show. In verse 14, “they passed by and went their way; and the sun went down on them near Gibeah”. Here, the concept of the sun going down does not come from *ba-‘erev*, but from two Hebrew words, *shemesh* (sun) and *bo* (to go). When the concept of the sun going down is being described, these seem to be the actual Hebrew words used throughout Scripture, as indicated by translators (c.f. Genesis 15:17; 28:11; Deuteronomy 23:11; Joshua 8:29). But in verse 15, following sunset, the travelers enter Gibeah, and failing to find somewhere to spend the night, they “sat down in the open square of the city.” “Just then an old man came in from his work in the field at evening” (v.16). The words “at evening” here are “*ba-‘erev*”, occurring in this case some time after sunset.

Another incident is recorded in 2 Kings 22:35-36. Ahab dies “at evening” (*ba-‘erev*). Then as the sun goes down (*bo shemesh*), a cry of retreat goes out. This time the sun goes down after “*ba-‘erev*”. Once again, Mr. Coulter’s desire for precise and restrictive word definitions does not hold up in Scripture.

Exodus 16 is what Mr. Coulter uses in chapter five to define “between the evenings” as being after sunset. Verse 13 says “quails came up at evening (*ba-‘erev*)”. By using the definition of “at evening” as precisely sunset, he makes the argument that since verse 12 indicates they would eat the quail “between the evenings”, then *ben ha-arbayim* had to be after sunset. Other passages of Scripture, however, show that the Hebrew word for “evening” (‘*erev*) can refer to a general period of time which includes time before sunset (cf. Genesis 24:11; Jeremiah 6:4). Hebrew lexicons agree. Therefore, when Exodus 16:13 says quails came “at evening” (“in the evening” - RSV), it does not necessarily pinpoint the exact moment of the day when this occurred. The quails could have come in the afternoon. In fact, others point to these same passages to

demonstrate that the two phrases essentially mean the same thing — that verse 13 is a reiteration and fulfillment of verse 12, discussing the same evening and morning, and that “evening” here is just a contraction of “between the evenings”.

Another possibility is that “evening” here could mean midday (noon), as in the story of David and Jonathan (1 Samuel 20:5, see Part 1 of this paper, page 5). If so they would have been preparing and eating the quail that afternoon — between the two “evenings” of noon and sundown.

Mr. Coulter points out that the quails were brought right into the camp so that the Israelites could collect them easily. He assumes this was because it would have been getting dark and God didn’t want the people stumbling around in the wilderness (p.48/42). But that didn’t stop the people in Numbers 11 when the quails were found up to a day’s journey away and they gathered them all night (v.31-32). And Exodus 16:1 specifically says this was the 15th of the second month, which means there would have been a full moon. It is just as plausible that the quails arrived in the afternoon or at midday and that God had them delivered directly to the people so they would not have to go outside the camp on the Sabbath day. There is no indication of any excess being provided at this time for the people to “gather”, only enough to satisfy their immediate hunger.

Mr. Coulter states that God would not have sent the quails until after the Sabbath had ended because, as he reasons, “God was teaching the people to rest on the Sabbath. God did not want the people to transgress the Sabbath day by gathering the quail. Neither did He want them doing the work involved in killing, cleaning, and roasting the quail on the Sabbath. If God had sent the quail BEFORE sunset --BEFORE the Sabbath had ended--and had allowed the people to gather, clean and roast the quail on the Sabbath day, why would He have condemned some of the people on the next Sabbath day when they went looking for manna?” (pp.46-47 / with some word differences in the first edition, pp.42-43).

While at first this may seem like a forceful argument, it is an argument based on personal opinion, and is not required by Exodus 16. The people were obviously quite hungry, and unlike the next Sabbath, for which they were instructed *in advance* to gather and prepare their bread ahead

of time, neither instruction nor food had yet been provided at the time the quail were brought. We could assume through our preconceived ideas that God would not permit them to prepare and eat quail before sundown. But when the rest of the Bible is examined (cf. 1 Samuel 21:1-6; Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28), it shows that God, in his mercy, could indeed have provided the Israelites with quail in the afternoon of the very day He promised it (cf. Proverbs 3:27-28) without violating His law. That day, being a weekly Sabbath, was meant to be “a delight” (Isaiah 58:13), some even say a feast day (Leviticus 23:2-3), not a day for suffering hunger. And God provided for the people accordingly with meat at their tent doors (not outside the camp, like the manna) that was relatively quick and easy to prepare, since they could not have prepared ahead of time.

The example of the Passover itself shows that God sometimes *required* animals to be slaughtered on the Sabbath day by His people for their own food. In some years, the 14th day of the first Hebrew month falls on a Sabbath day. And whether one chooses to believe that the Passover lambs were slain at the beginning or end of the day, there is no way to get around the fact that, in such years, a sacrifice on the 14th was a sacrifice on the Sabbath day. And there was a lot more work involved in slaughtering and roasting the Passover lambs than there would have been in preparing the quick-cooking quail.

God rules the Sabbath day, and can provide food on that day if He so chooses. He can even demand that the Israelites fight wars on the Sabbath (see Joshua 6:15-24). If He sent quail on the Sabbath day, that was His business.

The Hebrew phrase *ben ha-arbayim* (between the two evenings), in addition to defining the time of the Passover sacrifice and when the quails were eaten, also identifies the timing of two other activities. As discussed in Part 1 of this presentation, the evening sacrifice was offered between the two evenings. And the lighting of the lamps in the Holy Place, along with the burning of incense on the altar, was also done sometime during this same “between the evenings” time period (Exodus 30:7-8). By Coulter’s definition of “between the evenings”, the lamps would have to have been lit after sundown. But the Holy Place in

the tabernacle was devoid of windows. Although the east-facing doorway could have collected ample light in the morning hours, the room would have been quite gloomy by the late afternoon, especially on a cloudy day. It makes more sense that the lamps were lit sometime *before* sundown, while there was still plenty of daylight for the priest to see what he was doing, and to keep the interior of the tabernacle lit up. (It should be noted that the light of day does not wait for sundown to begin growing dark. Even in a house with west-facing windows and a skylight, we usually find ourselves turning on the lights during the hour before sundown to compensate for the gloom of late afternoon shadows.)

But of more significance, the lighting of the lamps was to coincide with the offering of incense. As with the daily sacrifice, incense was offered twice each day, first in the morning, and a second time “between the two evenings”. (If this were after sundown, it would more logically be the first time during the day, but it is never expressed that way). Revelation 8:3-4 and 5:8 equate incense with prayer. Luke 1:9-10 equates prayer with the hour of incense. In Psalm 141:2, David equates his prayer with incense, and then goes on to link his prayer with the evening sacrifice. Ezra fasted until the time of the evening sacrifice, and then began a heartfelt prayer, further equating prayer with the time of the evening sacrifice (Ezra 9:4-5). But note when Luke tells us the afternoon hour of prayer was: “Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth *hour*” (Acts 3:1, see also Acts 10:3,30). This was 3 p.m.

In the second edition (p.104), Mr. Coulter has apparently been alerted to the fact that these morning and evening sacrificial events (including the offering of incense) are always listed with the morning event first. He makes some strange statements about Hebrew grammatical syntax to claim that in these verses, not only is the order not necessarily chronological, but in fact cannot be. This bizarre concept, however, completely ignores the fact that the Hebrew words state explicitly that the “first” lamb was offered in the morning and the “second” in the evening.

Beginning on page 72 (63 in the first edition) is a discussion of the words for “night” (*lailah* —

spelled *layil* in *Strong’s*) and “morning” (*boqer*). The book claims that these two Hebrew words are mutually exclusive — that there is a moment in time when night ends and morning begins, and that there is no overlap. This goes along with previous statements to define *ba-’erev* as precisely sundown, followed by *ben ha-’arbayim*, followed by *lailah*, then *boqer*, and presumably other words precisely defining the rest of the day, with no overlap of terms. Coulter states: “‘Night,’ translated from the Hebrew *lailah*, is the entire dark period of each twenty-four hour day. It extends from the end of *ben ha-’arbayim*, when darkness has come, to the arrival of *boqer*, or morning” (p.75/reworded from first edition, p.66). But he also refers to “the spring of the year, when the days and nights are nearly equal in duration” (p.80/71). Obviously, he agrees with the commonly accepted idea that “night” in this case includes the twilight hours, since during the spring it is sunrise and sunset which are roughly twelve hours apart, not the beginning of dawn and the end of dusk. Yet he would have us believe that when the Hebrews used *lailah*, they referred only to the “dark” part of night, since he claims *lailah* never overlaps with *boqer* (morning). Therefore when Scripture speaks of day and night, as in Genesis 1:5 or when Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights, the Hebrew must mean long periods of “day” and relatively short periods of “night”. This, of course, is absurd. While it may be nice to think of a language where there are very precise meanings to such time expressions, English, Greek, and the very poetic Hebrew language are not that way.

The book asserts that *boqer* (morning) cannot refer to time before dawn by claiming that it is never used that way. But citing several examples where *boqer* is after dawn does not prove that it cannot also be used for time before dawn.

Boqer is frequently coupled with the word “light” (Hebrew *’owr*) to refer to the “morning light” (cf. 1 Samuel 14:36; 1 Samuel 25:36; 2 Kings 7:9). In some verses (cf. Genesis 44:3; Micah 2:1), the KJV, and other literal translations, read “when the morning is light”. If morning *always* means light, why did the Hebrew authors use such redundant words, and especially a phrase which implies there could be a time when morning *isn’t* light?

On pages 79-80 (69-70 first edition), the book cites some examples of Moses rising early in the morning (Exodus 7:15 and Exodus 8:16, which should have been Exodus 8:20, a typographic error in both editions), and shows that the activities he was rising for were obviously after dawn. Certainly *boqer* includes time after dawn. But the phrase “early in the morning” (Hebrew *shakam boqer*) is a commonly used Scriptural way of referring to early rising, used over 30 times, and it is difficult to believe that *boqer* absolutely must, in all of these cases, mean after dawn. Two good examples are referred to by Coulter (1 Samuel 19:10, which should have been 1 Samuel 29:10, error in both editions, and 1 Kings 3:21), but they are dismissed by arguing “when we examine these verses in their Scriptural context, we find no indication that ‘morning’, or *boqer*, refers to any time near midnight” (p.80/reworded from first edition, p.70). They do, however, show that early morning could have been before dawn, even if not “near midnight”. The woman in Proverbs 31 clearly made a habit of burning the candle at both ends (Proverbs 31:15,18). With nights being quite long, particularly in the winter months, people who get up “early in the morning” obviously are up before dawn some of the time. The Hebrew language uses the phrase *shakam boqer* in much the same way as the English “early in the morning”, which is why it is consistently translated that way.

The Greek language isn’t restrictive in its use of “morning” either. Coulter discusses, and attempts to dismiss, Mark 1:35 which refers to rising “in the morning... a great while before day”. He states this was a mistranslation, and should have read “very early **while yet night**” (using a translation by George Berry). He goes on to say that: “The use of this Greek word [*ennuxon*, night] in Mark 1:35 does not support the claim that the dark hours of the night are “morning” (p.81). The first edition reads: “The correct translation of this verse in no way supports the claim that any part of the night was called ‘morning’” (p.71).

You do not have to be a Greek scholar to be able to look up words in a concordance and see how they are used in the New Testament. Mark 1:35 deals with two time expressions. One, *proi*, is translated “in the morning” or, in his preferred translation, “very early”; the other, *ennuxon*, as

“before day” or “while yet night”. *Ennuxon* is only used once in Scripture, and it does appear to mean “in the night” as Mr. Coulter states. (The usual Greek word for “night” is *nux*, obviously related.) The word for “in the morning” (*proi*) is never mentioned by Coulter. It is quite apparent, though, that Coulter is arguing that Mark 1:35 was mistranslated because he does not want *proi* to mean “morning”. But *proi* (with its variations) is used 16 times in the New Testament. It is most often translated “morning”, and 12 of the 17 uses of “morning” in the KJV come from some form of the word *proi* (cf. Matthew 16:3; 20:1; Mark 11:20; 16:2). Sometimes *proi* refers to time after sunrise, as in Mark 16:2: “Very **early in the morning**, on the first *day* of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.” However, in Mark 1:35 *proi* is being overlapped with the time-frame of “night”, a concept made even more clear by the Berry translation. Although Mr. Coulter wants to convince us that this “mistranslated” verse does not overlap night with morning, in correctly pointing out the use of “night” in the verse, he has clearly shown that night and morning **do** overlap. His condemnation of others who have taught the truth on this matter (questioning *their* scholarship and understanding of Greek, and claiming *they* were deliberately trying to mislead), may cloud the issue for those who accept his statements without verifying them, but they do not make the truth any less true. “Morning” in New Testament Greek, as shown in this verse, can and **does** overlap “night”.

I will not go further with a discussion on the timing of “between the evenings”, “evening” and “morning”. That was addressed in Part 1 of this paper. Nor will I address here his discussion on the logistics of the Exodus for the same reason.

The Temple-Centered Passover

Beginning with chapter nine, Mr. Coulter elaborates on his theory that the Passover was never meant to be offered at the temple. He points out that Numbers 28–29 is a comprehensive list of prescribed offerings which were to be made at the tabernacle, but he tries to claim that since the word “offering” is not found in Numbers 28:16 describing the Passover, it was an exception. He states: “**Notice that no instructions for the Passover sacrifice are listed among these sacrifices.**”

Nowhere in Numbers 28 or 29 do we find any mention of a Passover sacrifice at the tabernacle” (p.109, emphasis his). The first edition reads: “Notice that *nowhere is the Passover sacrifice listed* in this enumeration of the sacrifices required to be offered at the tabernacle” (p.97, emphasis his).

Coulter acknowledges throughout his book that the Passover involved a sacrifice (cf. Exodus 12:27), and he freely admits the Passover is mentioned in Numbers 28:16, with no explanation as to what it is doing in this list if it’s not to be offered at the tabernacle. But he tries to claim that since the word “offering” is not used in this verse, the Passover was not a tabernacle offering. He goes on for several paragraphs trying to knock translations which insert “sacrifice” or “offering” after the word Passover in Numbers 28:16. But in 2 Chronicles 35:6-9, translators insert the word “offering” in describing the Passover, and there is absolutely no question they were correct in doing so. Perhaps it has never occurred to Mr. Coulter that the Hebrew word for “Passover” (*pesach*) implies “offering” in the same manner as the Hebrew words for “peace-offering” (which he cites as *zebah*, although the word for peace-offering is usually *shelem*) and “burnt-offering” (*’olah*), for which the Hebrew word for “offering” is also implied and not used in Numbers 28–29.

On page 109 (98 first edition), he states: “The Hebrew word for ‘offering’ in general, *qarob*, used in Verse 2 [of Numbers 28], is not found in Verse 16.” But *qarob*, or *qarab* as transliterated in *Strong’s*, is **not** the Hebrew word for offering in general. *Qarab* is a verb, not a noun, although among other things it does mean to “bring” or “offer”, and is used in the phrase to “bring [*qarab*] an offering”, as in Leviticus 1:2. The word for “offering” in the Hebrew is actually *qorban*, referred to by Jesus in Mark 7:11. *Qarab*, the verb, is used nine times in Numbers 28–29. *Qorban*, the noun, is used only in verse 2, where it is used to introduce this list of offerings (with the Passover included in the list) to be offered to God “at their appointed time”. It is true that neither *qarab* nor *qorban* appears in Numbers 28:16. But Numbers 9:7 and 9:13 use both words to describe the Passover, and condemn anyone who does not “bring [*qarab*] the offering [the *qorban* — specifically referring to the Passover] of the LORD at its appointed time” (v.13).

Mr. Coulter tries to use Numbers 9 to prove that the Passover remained a domestic observance. His conclusion is that since this first post-Egypt Passover was to be observed with “all its rites and ceremonies” (v.3, NKJV) or “ordinances and statutes” (JPSA), that this meant exactly as it had been done the first time — in their homes, and with blood on the doorposts and lintel (although one might wonder whether the tents the Israelites were dwelling in at the time even had doorposts and lintels). And, since this was an opportunity for God to instruct the Israelites on the fact that He wanted the sacrifice made at the just completed tabernacle, and since that instruction is not given in Numbers 9, Mr. Coulter feels this sacrifice wasn’t to be done there. He asks: “In the account of the second Passover in Numbers 9 do we find any indication that God added to, or took away from, or changed *any* of the original ordinances and statutes of the Passover? WE DO NOT FIND ANY CHANGE WHATSOEVER!” (p. 95, first edition, emphasis his). The second edition reads: “The Scriptural record of Israel’s second Passover shows **no change** in the time or the manner of its observance. The children of Israel followed all the ordinances and statutes that were established at the first Passover, as recorded in Exodus 12. There is no indication that God added to, or eliminated, or altered any of the ordinances and statutes that were observed at the Passover in Egypt. WE DO NOT FIND ANY CHANGE WHATSOEVER!” (p.107, emphasis his).

Even if this were true, the lack of specific instructions in Numbers 9 pertaining to changes in the Passover would prove nothing. God did give such instructions elsewhere in the Law. But in fact, there are changes stated or implied by the account in Numbers 9. The whole concept of not being able to keep the Passover because someone was defiled by a dead body (v.6-7) was new. But more importantly, verses 7 and 13 describe **bringing** the offering (the *qorban*), as explained above, which was not part of the original Passover observance, and raises the question as to where the Passover offering was being brought. The answer to this question is apparent in the *Strong’s* definition of *qorban*: “something **brought near the altar**, i.e. a sacrificial present.” Even Exodus 12:48 gives the information that, when the Passover was kept in succeeding generations as

a memorial it was to be kept “to the Lord”, and only when one was circumcised would he be permitted to “**come near** [Hebrew *qarab*] and keep it”. As explained in Part 1, Leviticus 17 clearly defined that all sacrificial offerings were to be brought to the tabernacle so that their blood could be offered on God’s altar.

The Old Testament relates details of only six Passover observances by name. They are described in Exodus 12–13, Numbers 9, Joshua 5, 2 Chronicles 30, 2 Chronicles 35 (with a brief parallel account in 2 Kings 23), and Ezra 6. Remarkably, all of these Passovers present difficulties for the early 14th view of the Old Testament Passover. By contrast, even Mr. Coulter finds very few issues in these accounts which need to be addressed by those in support of the late 14th view. (These issues seem to be confined to Exodus 12 and Numbers 9, and have already been discussed.) There are also eight additional places in the Old Testament which refer directly to the Passover or Days of Unleavened Bread: Exodus 23, Exodus 34, Leviticus 23, Numbers 28, Numbers 33, Deuteronomy 16, 2 Chronicles 8 and Ezekiel 45. None of these present any particular problem for the late 14th view (although Coulter tries to invent some as in the case of Numbers 28). Several of these passages, especially Deuteronomy 16, do contain difficult verses for those who hold the early 14th view.

Chapters twelve and thirteen of Coulter’s book discuss the Passovers in 2 Chronicles and the hows and whys of the author’s thesis that the Passover was changed from a domestic, early 14th observance to a temple-centered, late 14th observance. He feels that these Passovers were exceptions to how Passovers were normally kept, and were commanded to be observed in this manner by Hezekiah and Josiah because of a state of national spiritual decline. Coulter believes that while the intentions of these kings may have been honorable, and God may have even supported them in making some temporary changes, they set some very unfortunate precedents.

In an effort to defend this thesis, Mr. Coulter makes some astounding assertions. Some are even true. For example, in describing the Passovers in 2 Chronicles, several statements similar to this one on page 132 of the first edition are made: “In the

history of Israel and Judah before the Babylonian Captivity, we find only two occurrences in Scripture of a temple-killed, temple-centered Passover observance.” This is true, but misleading. The revised version of this statement on page 149 of the second edition is even more misleading: “From the time that the children of Israel entered the Promised Land until the time they were carried away to captivity in Babylon, we find only two occurrences in Scripture of a Passover that was not a domestic observance.” What is not stated is the fact that these are the *only* two accounts in Scripture of *any* of the Passover observances that were held in the Promised Land from the time it was conquered until the Babylonian captivity. While Coulter’s statement was undoubtedly meant to demonstrate the lack of examples in Scripture of temple-centered Passovers, the fact is that *all* Passovers described in the Bible (even the one in Ezra 6 after the return from captivity) are centered around the tabernacle or temple. There simply are no occurrences in Scripture of non-temple-centered Passovers (except, of course, the one in Egypt).

Other assertions are not true, however. In discussing the alleged role of Hezekiah in making changes to the Passover, Coulter contrasts Hezekiah’s actions with those who were before him. On page 127 of the first edition, we find this erroneous statement: “Although David composed many psalms, and helped Samuel institute the ordering of the priests, he never exerted authority over the priests or the tabernacle.” (The second edition on page 142 reads similarly, but eliminates the phrase “or the tabernacle”.) I am not sure just what was meant here by exerting authority. David commanded the priests to move the ark, giving instructions in how *he* wanted it done (first the wrong way and later the right way). He sought to replace the tabernacle with a temple, chose a new location for the altar and temple, and made all of the plans and arrangements for it. He thoroughly organized the priesthood, Levites, singers and gatekeepers. And he established regulations on how temple services were to be conducted (2 Chronicles 8:14; 35:4). But any joint involvement with Samuel had to have been restricted to David’s very early years, because Samuel died during Saul’s reign, before David became king.

In several places Mr. Coulter argues that the two Second Chronicles Passovers were done “at the commandment of the king”, rather than according to God’s Word. But the Biblical context shows this phrase was being used to *commend* the people for obeying the king in doing something right for a change. Many verses in these chapters demonstrate that what the Israelites were doing was in *agreement* with God’s Word. 2 Chronicles 30:12 says: “Also the hand of God was on Judah to give them singleness of heart **to do the commandment of the king and the leaders, at the word of the LORD**” (NKJV), or as the RSV has it: “...to do what the king and the princes commanded by the word of the LORD.” Verse 16 says that the priests and Levites (prodded by the king’s orders, v.12) acted “according to the law of Moses.”

2 Chronicles 35:6 quotes Josiah as saying: “So slaughter the Passover *offerings*, sanctify yourselves, and prepare *them* for your brethren, that *they* may do according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.” 2 Kings 23:21 says: “Then the king commanded all the people, saying, ‘Keep the Passover to the LORD your God, as *it is* written in this Book of the Covenant.’” Even with 2 Chronicles 30:18, which says “yet did they eat the Passover otherwise than it is written” and is cited by Mr. Coulter as an indication that they were doing things differently, the context clearly shows that this did not apply to everyone, but only to those who had not cleansed themselves, particularly those from the Northern Tribes. Hezekiah’s prayer for forgiveness dealt exclusively with this purification issue as the *only* transgression. (This was already the second month; he had just started his reign, and this was the best they could do that year.) These verses showing that what was done was according to the word of God take on added significance when we realize the Passovers described here were being offered during the daylight portion of the 14th, as Mr. Coulter himself admits (p.142/128).

Both of the Passovers in 2 Chronicles imply earlier observances. 2 Chronicles 30:26 refers to nothing like this since the days of Solomon. 2 Chronicles 35:18 says, “there had been no Passover kept in Israel like that since the days of Samuel the prophet”. This indicates that in Samuel’s day, Passovers were also elaborate

centralized observances. In fact, 1 Samuel records that even before Samuel was born, his family went to “the house of the Lord” at Shiloh (to God’s tabernacle) every year “to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice” (1 Samuel 1:7,21). This was undoubtedly the Passover, since the Passover sacrifice was the *only* annual sacrifice required of individuals or families.

As mentioned earlier, Mr. Coulter makes the claim that the Bible nowhere says how the Passover was to be observed after entering the Promised Land, and that the Israelites were therefore expected to observe it according to all the original instructions in Egypt. But the book of Deuteronomy was written chiefly to clarify how the laws of God should be observed in the new land. The changes in how Passovers were to be observed were written down in Deuteronomy 16. Since these instructions do not agree with Mr. Coulter’s original conclusion, they must be re-interpreted. So we get a scenario created in chapters fourteen and fifteen of *The Christian Passover* which goes something like this: Ezra was faced with a mounting Samaritan threat in his day. To keep the Jews focused on God and His newly reconstructed temple, he changed the Passover to always be a temple-centered observance, wrote Chronicles (to include precedents for such temple-centered Passovers) and canonized the Scriptures. Since they hadn’t been canonized yet, he was free to make some editorial changes. Therefore, in Deuteronomy 16, Ezra must have changed whatever the original text said to read “Passover”, which by Ezra’s day had taken on the meaning of the entire Days of Unleavened Bread and wouldn’t be confusing. There is, of course, no proof that Ezra did this, but since Deuteronomy 16 doesn’t agree with Coulter’s doctrinal position, he feels somebody must have changed it, and Ezra seems the most likely culprit.

Mr. Coulter theorizes at length on why Hezekiah, Josiah and Ezra would have changed the Passover into a temple ritual. He states: “When we understand the idolatrous history of Israel and Judah, it is evident that Hezekiah instituted the temple-centered Passover because the people could not be trusted to keep the Passover at home. They had strayed far from God and had rejected His commandments and laws, and they were so steeped in Baal and Asherah

worship that it was not feasible to allow them to keep a domestic Passover” (p.147, second edition; a similar statement is found on p.130 of the first edition). “As in the time of Hezekiah, Josiah called for a mandatory Passover to be kept at Jerusalem.... This Passover was to be supervised by the priests and the Levites in Jerusalem to ensure that the people did not return to their habitual paganism” (p.153/revised from first edition, p.136). “In order to combat this counterfeit religion [the Jewish/Samaritan religion], Ezra forbade the offering of any sacrifices to God except at the temple in Jerusalem. Undoubtedly, he also restricted the domestic killing of the Passover lambs to the vicinity of Jerusalem” (p.189/revised from p.171).

But did these men of God have the authority to add to what God had ordained in order to keep the people in line (Deuteronomy 4:2)? Did they have to impose rules which, if God had had the foresight, He could have established Himself? God knew the problems that would result if the Israelites sacrificed away from a central location. For this very reason He gave Moses these instructions recorded in Deuteronomy 12:2-6: “You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. ³ And you shall destroy their altars, break their *sacred* pillars, and burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their names from that place. ⁴ You shall not worship the LORD your God *with such things*. ⁵ But you shall seek the place where the LORD your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His habitation; and there you shall go. ⁶ There you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and flocks.” It is for this very same reason that Deuteronomy 16:2 says: “Therefore you shall sacrifice the Passover to the LORD your God, from the flock and the herd, in the place where the LORD chooses to put His name.”

Mr. Coulter’s conclusion regarding Deuteronomy 16 is that the first eight verses are not dealing with the Passover at all, but strictly with the Days of Unleavened Bread. He sees as proof several

differences with the original Passover in Egypt, some references to the Days of Unleavened Bread, and mostly conflicts with his previous conclusions, which according to his Bible study rules require that he seek out some sort of explanation. I am personally a bit uncomfortable with a doctrinal position that requires such an elaborate explanation of why the Bible does not say what it says.

One of Mr. Coulter’s arguments against recognizing Deuteronomy 16 as instructions for the Passover involves the Hebrew word *bashal* in verse 7: “And you shall roast [*bashal*] and eat it...” He claims: “The Hebrew word translated ‘roast’ in Deuteronomy 16:7 actually should have been translated ‘boil’ or ‘seethe’! It is wholly incorrect to translate the Hebrew word used in the Hebrew text as ‘roast’” (p.150, first edition. The wording on p.169 of the second edition is similar, but not as concise). He cites several verses where *bashal* is translated “boil”, and concludes that since the word is also translated “sodden” or “boiled” in Exodus 12:9 as something not to be done with the Passover, then the offering spoken of in Deuteronomy 16:7 could not possibly be the Passover. But that conclusion is drawn from yet another incomplete analysis of Biblical word definitions. The very same Hebrew word translated “roast” in Deuteronomy 16:7 is also used in 2 Samuel 13:8, where Tamar “took flour and kneaded *it*, made cakes in his sight, and baked [*bashal*] the cakes.” Normally people don’t knead flour and then boil it, so this translation is probably correct. The word *bashal* appears to be a fairly general term meaning “to cook” rather than specifying whether a given food is to be roasted, baked, or boiled. *Gesenius’* lexicon concurs. The NRSV renders Deuteronomy 16:7 accordingly: “You shall cook it and eat it at the place that the LORD your God will choose....”

In 2 Chronicles 35:13, the Passover is specifically described: “Also they roasted [*bashal* /cooked] the Passover *offerings* with fire according to the ordinance; but the *other* holy *offerings* they boiled [*bashal* /cooked] in pots, in caldrons, and in pans....” Here the distinction is made between the roasting of the Passover and the preparation of the other offerings using pots, yet the same Hebrew word is used. The type of cooking is not apparently inherent in the word *bashal* itself, but in the words which modify it. In Exodus 12:9, therefore, the

prohibition does not center on the word *bashal*, but rather that the Passover was not to be “boiled [*bashal* — cooked, JPS] at all **with water**”. There is no conflict between Deuteronomy 16:7 and Exodus 12:9, and no reason Deuteronomy 16:7 cannot apply to the Passover, as it says it does.

Fred Coulter’s revisionist approach to Scripture permeates his book, and even more so in the second edition. On pages 153-158, his revised version of Josiah’s Passover quotes extensively from 2 Chronicles 35, highlighting many of the verses I have cited here regarding the fact that the Passover was being kept according to the word of God. But he maintains that the offerings were not being offered correctly, so when Scripture says “Passover offerings” it does not mean Passover offerings, but related offerings. For example, he cites verse 13 which states the Passover offerings were cooked [*bashal*] with fire, and maintains that this is a blatant mistranslation because *bashal* means boil. But “fire” is in the original Hebrew, and the concept of “boiling with fire” is not used in Scripture (it is always burning or roasting with fire). It should be obvious that these roast (cooked with fire) offerings are being contrasted with those that are cooked [*bashal*] in pots and cauldrons (boiled), or in pans (fried), with emphasis placed on the fact that they were being roasted “according to the ordinance”. The manner of cooking non-Passover peace offerings is not regulated by any ordinance — only the Passover. These most definitely are Passover offerings, as the Scriptures clearly state that they are. Nevertheless, Coulter concludes these could not be Passover offerings (although he said they were in the first edition, page 137), since they don’t match his idea of what a Passover offering should be. He recognizes that the account clearly shows this was the daylight part of the 14th, so he decides this really is not the Passover being described.

If the Bible doesn’t agree with your theology, why not simply come up with a new explanation, rather than let the Bible correct your misconceptions? You can claim Deuteronomy 16 was edited by Ezra; that it doesn’t really deal with the Passover at all. You can state that Joshua 5 was changed as well; that it can’t be talking about the Passover either because it is the wrong time of day. 2 Chronicles 35 might look like the Passover, but there are so many things that don’t match an early 14th after-sunset

Passover, you must conclude it really can’t be the Passover after all. The same must be true of 2 Chronicles 30. Apparently, when you really get down to it, the Bible doesn’t talk about the Passover much at all, does it? I write as a fool!

In actual fact, all of these Scriptures agree with each other in perfect harmony with the laws of Passover observance when the Passover is correctly seen as being at the end of the 14th. There is no need to alter these plain Scriptures when the truth is accepted. No wild speculations or explanations are needed to try to prove that the Bible doesn’t say what it seems to say. Is Coulter really being honest with the Word of God? Yet this regrettable approach is not confined to his use of Scripture.

Extra-Biblical Evidence

Although Mr. Coulter cannot find much extra-Biblical support for his view, he tries to make the most of what he can find, sometimes by conveniently leaving out words that might otherwise weaken his argument. On page 50 (45 first edition), he cites a definition from *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon*: “*Ben ha arbayim, between the two evenings... between sunset and dark.*” Note the ellipsis (...), which would normally imply that words of no consequence were left out. Since these outside sources are not always easy to find, the reader can often do little more than trust that the author is portraying his sources accurately. I have not been able to verify all of Coulter’s outside sources. But in this case, the words left out are “i.e. prob.[probably]”, indicating the authors of the Lexicon were not sure that this was the meaning of the Hebrew words. Perhaps since Mr. Coulter is sure of the meaning, he felt free to remove this element of doubt and add their scholarly knowledge to his argument.

On page 112 (100), and again on page 209 (173), Coulter cites the Jewish philosopher and historian Philo (*The Works of Philo*, translated by C. D. Young [that should read, Yonge], 1992). One of the sentences in his quote is given as follows: “In this festival many myriads of victims are offered--*by the whole people*, old and young alike, raised for that particular day to the dignity of the priesthood.” This time, instead of an ellipsis, a double hyphen appears where words have been left out. The missing words according to one source are “from noon till eventide”. The 1995

translation of Yonge's *Philo*, which I have seen, says, "beginning at noonday and continuing till evening". Since Coulter is trying to use Philo to prove a domestic Passover, rather than the timing of the Passover, this omission may not seem critical. It does simplify his job, since he doesn't need to comment on Philo's contradiction to his belief, but it erroneously conveys the idea that Philo is on his side. And an unaltered quote would have raised the question as to why such a long period of time would have been required for a domestic sacrifice. But the omission also calls into question Coulter's trustworthiness regarding such quotes. Are there more misquotes we could find if we had access to all of these scholarly works? Even worse, others trust his accuracy and perpetuate these errors. Both of these misquotes, with identical punctuation, have found their way into articles by other people attempting to defend an early 14th Passover.

Coulter boldly states: "Philo's records give us firm historical evidence that at the time of Jesus, and shortly after, there was widespread observance of the domestic Passover" (p.210/174 with a few word changes). Does Philo support Coulter's concept of a domestic Passover? The only thing Philo is pointing out in any of the passages Coulter uses is that the animals were killed by the people, not the priests. The sacrificial laws instructed the people to kill their own animals for private sacrifices (cf. Leviticus 1:5), but gave responsibility to the priests to sprinkle the blood. This was true of the Passover lambs as well. 2 Chronicles 30:16-17 states that "the Levites had charge of the slaughter of the Passover lambs for everyone *who was not clean*." Those who were clean followed the normal procedure of killing their own animals, as described by Philo. But the Passover was still a sacrifice, it's blood still had to be given to the priests to be offered at the altar (cf. 2 Chronicles 35:11), and nothing in Philo states otherwise. In fact, one reason why these offerings were being made "from noon till eventide" involved the large numbers of animals whose blood had to be offered at the altar, as opposed to the rather quick domestic slaying proposed by Coulter, with the blood merely smeared year by year onto private doorposts.

On page 210 (174), Coulter quotes Joachim Jeremias (*Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 1969, 1989)

to try to prove that the environs of the city of Jerusalem were considered to be part of the "greater festival area", and therefore the lambs could be slain anywhere within that area. But the section quoted says nothing about where the lambs were slain. It only addresses the practice that the participants in the Passover meal remained in the vicinity of Jerusalem during the night in which they ate the Passover (cf. Deuteronomy 16:7). Coulter knows that Jeremias believes the Passover was killed at the temple (p.218/182). What he does not quote is what Jeremias states on page 78 of his book: "It is a fact that in Jesus' time the Passover victims were always slain in the Temple and not in private houses. This was because the Passover lamb was a sacrifice and its blood had to be used ceremonially." Jeremias' words, understood in their own context, do nothing to support Coulter's view.

On page 38 (35) of *The Christian Passover* there is a long quote from Alfred Edersheim regarding the cutting of the wave sheaf. Coulter claims, "Edersheim's statements show conclusively that *ba'erev*, 'at sunset', was fully understood by the Jews as the point the present day ended and the next day began" (p.40/slightly reworded from the first edition, p.35). Yet, although it is clear from the quote that Edersheim viewed sundown as a significant time marker for wave sheaf cutting, Edersheim's words say absolutely nothing about the meaning of the Hebrew term *ba'erev*. And elsewhere in the same book, Edersheim states his belief that it was the appearance of the first three stars that began a new day, not sunset (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, pp.479,490). Still other passages make it quite clear that Edersheim viewed the Passover as a sacrifice that was slain on the afternoon of the 14th (defining "between the two evenings" as "the interval between the commencement of the sun's decline [noon] and what was reckoned as the hour of his final disappearance (about 6 p.m.)" (p.490), with the lamb being eaten during the evening at the beginning of the 15th. And in Edersheim's book on *The Temple*, we find this statement: "...it must always be remembered that the Passover was sacrificed between the evenings of the 14th and the 15th of Nisan; that is, before the close of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th. The Paschal Supper,

however, took place on the 15th itself (that is, according to Jewish reckoning--the day beginning as the first stars became visible)” (Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple*, p.172).

Josephus was born into a priestly family of Judea in 37 AD. Coulter does not like what Josephus has to say about the Passover, but he still tries to elicit Josephus’ support as best he can. First, in an effort to discredit him, he challenges Josephus’ reliability. On page 60 (53), he states, “He wholly ignores, as if they had never occurred, the life and ministry of Jesus Christ; the trial, crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus....” This is not true, as a reading of *Antiquities 18.3.3* would show. Josephus does not dwell on Jesus, but he calls Him the Christ, and he does mention His wonderful works, death on the cross and resurrection, and generally speaks very highly of Him. But Josephus was a Jew, not a Christian, and we would not necessarily expect much, if any, mention of Jesus in his works.

Coulter also states on page 60 (53 first edition, reworded) that “Josephus was a staunch supporter of the traditional belief in a Passover at Rameses”, and that Josephus “indicates that the children of Israel left their houses prior to the Passover.” Yet Josephus never mentions Rameses, or Raamses. And the only proof Coulter cites for these claims is taken from *Antiquities 2.14.6*. Here Josephus says that Moses, “having sorted the people into tribes, he kept them together in one place”. Coulter assumes this is a description of Moses taking them to the city of Raamses, so when Josephus further says they “purified their houses with the blood”, Coulter makes a big issue of what he says is a “gross internal contradiction” (61/53). Coulter himself invents a scenario for Josephus, and then labels it “ridiculous”. It certainly is a strange scenario, but Josephus neither wrote nor implied it. Why does stating that Moses kept the Israelites together mean it had to be in some city apart from whatever central dwelling area there may have been in Goshen? The Scriptures themselves say that Moses was to “Speak to all the congregation of Israel” indicating that they were assembled for that purpose and that they were to take “a lamb, according to the house of *his* father, a lamb for a household” (Exodus 12:3), showing that there was at least some sort of household, patriarchal

organization with every family member accounted for and gathered in attendance for the Passover.

On pages 218-219 (182-183), Coulter quotes from Josephus’ account of the last Passover before the destruction of the temple (*Wars 6.9.3*). While the section quoted is indeed in the account of that final Passover, it is actually giving details about a previous Passover. By reading the quote in context, we find that Josephus was verifying how many Jews there would have been in Jerusalem at the Passover in 70 AD by describing a Passover that occurred a few years earlier in the days of Nero. The Romans had wanted a census taken, and they accomplished this by having the priests estimate the number present at the Passover Feast. The priests did this by counting the number of Paschal lambs, and arrived at over one quarter million lambs. Coulter says this number was too large for a temple sacrifice, so he concludes most lambs were being killed at home.

Josephus does not describe how all of these animals were killed. However, it is clear that the priests somehow knew how many lambs there were, and were so confident in that figure that they chose to count the sacrifices and estimate the people instead of counting the people. If thousands of these lambs never appeared in any way at the temple, not even as a basin of blood to be offered at the altar, how did the priests count them? Not only were these *sacrifices*, which had to be offered at the temple, but Josephus says they were slain during a two hour block of time, **in the afternoon**, not after sundown. The point is, Coulter doesn’t seem to believe the story as related by Josephus. Yet he believes that Josephus’ numbers are correct. If we can’t believe Josephus’ statements about *when* and *where* the sacrifices were slain, why use his words to prove anything? Josephus, (a descendant of Aaron, born into a priestly family) was an eyewitness of what went on in Jerusalem at that time. I suspect, in this case, he knew what he was writing about. But Coulter reads into Josephus’ words a lot of things that just aren’t there.

If the Passover was, and continued to be, a domestic observance right up to the destruction of the second temple, as Coulter tries to claim, then why did it stop being observed? If no temple were needed, there was no reason to ever cease keeping the Passover.

New Testament Considerations

On pages 65-69 (58-60) of Coulter's book is a discussion of the length of time it would have taken the Israelites to kill, prepare, eat and clean up the Passover meal. In the first edition of his book, he claims his estimates are "as realistic as possible" (p.58). In the second edition, he must have done more research, because the estimation is now "based on actual performance of these tasks" (p.66). Each part of the process is analyzed and broken down, with this summary: "The total time needed to have the meal ready is estimated to be from 4 and 1/2 hours at the earliest, to 5 and 3/4 hours at the latest, which includes 30-45 minutes to have the lamb ready and 4-5 hours to roast it" (p.67/59). The modern descendants of the Samaritans (whose sacrificing is done at Mount Gerizim, alluded to in John 4:20) continue to roast a whole lamb for their "Passover", and eyewitness accounts confirm it takes four or more hours just for the roasting. This is based on a 20-30 pound animal. "To completely burn the skin, intestines, fat and bones would take 2-3 hours, since bones in particular burn very slowly" (p.68/60). There is also eating time in here, which Coulter says in his first edition could have been as short as half an hour. And probably allowing for incidentals, he feels the whole process could be finished in 8-10 hours. Assuming as he does that the process began at 6 p.m., he says they could have been finished by 2-3 a.m. For some reason, though, he feels that this carefully laid out time frame shows "that it was not possible for the Passover and the Exodus to take place in the same night" (p.68/reworded from first edition, p.60). If the Israelites left at 2-3 a.m., they would certainly have been leaving at night, and also at a time commonly referred to as morning. And if the lambs were killed even earlier, a few hours before sunset (toward the end of the 14th), there is definitely adequate time to fit the Passover meal into the same night as the departure from Goshen.

In the New Testament, however, Coulter is faced with the opposite problem. Instead of trying to show how much needed to be accomplished, making it virtually impossible for the Israelites to leave before dawn, he must demonstrate that everything could have been accomplished in only a few short hours, so that there would still have been time for the arrest and trial, and the numerous other

documented events of the night Jesus was betrayed. Coulter's explanation of this is fairly sketchy in the first edition of his book, with the guess that the lamb was probably very small, and could have been ready as soon as 7:30 (p.200). In the second edition, he becomes more specific: "It is probable that the lamb for Jesus' last Passover was a very small lamb, which would require less time for roasting. If the lamb was only eight days old--the minimum age for a Passover lamb--it would weigh 10-12 pounds and would require only one and a half hours of roasting" (p.240). He still maintains his 7:30 completion time, and that "The subsequent events of that night indicate that the Passover meal began early and probably ended by 9 or 9:30 p.m." (p.241).

So now, instead of 8-10 hours to kill, roast and eat a lamb, including 2-3 hours to burn the remains, the entire process is completed in 3-3 1/2 hours, and the lamb itself is roasted in only 1 1/2 hours, with no time for the killing, bleeding and skinning. But, while a pre-dressed 3-lb. chicken could cook that fast, it is stretching it to suggest that a whole lamb could have been killed and prepared that quickly. This estimate from Coulter does not appear to have been based on actual experience.

Assuming a newborn lamb was available at that time of year (contrary to nature if Coulter is correct on page 66/59 that lambing time was 2-3 months before Passover), the lamb still had to be big enough to feed at least thirteen men. A 10-12 pound lamb could have provided only a small amount of meat for such a group. But even if we went with this minimal size, it would be quite a feat to have such an animal (roasted *whole*) ready to eat by 7:30 p.m. if it were not killed until after 6 p.m. Using a lamb that is half as big does not reduce the cooking time to one-fourth or less. Cooking a 10-pound turkey instead of a 20-pound turkey, for example, cuts the 6-hour cooking time to 4 hours. And allowing for the 30-45 minutes to kill, bleed and skin the animal, Coulter is left with only 45-60 minutes of roasting time. Yet Matthew 26:20 confirms that "when evening had come, He sat down with the twelve", which certainly does give the impression of a fairly early supper. And John 13:29-30 states that when Judas left "it was night" (which was an odd statement to make if it had been night all along). But it was still early enough for the disciples to

think that Judas might have been leaving to buy some supplies.

Coulter's book is based on the correct understanding that Jesus Christ's last supper was at the beginning of the 14th, on the night He was betrayed. A few New Testament passages which relate this event seem to call it the Passover (although Paul, interestingly, does not use the word "Passover" in 1 Corinthians 11). It might be logical therefore to conclude, as Coulter and others have, that Jesus was observing the Old Testament Passover and merely changing the symbols for future observances. But as pointed out above, the time involved in preparing a whole lamb, if it were killed after sundown, demonstrates this was impossible. (For an analysis of the New Testament passages about Passover see Part 1 of this paper.) And when the Old Testament is carefully examined, it does not support the concept of the Passover at the beginning of the 14th. Only by assigning an overly restrictive meaning to the word "morning" (*boqer*) and deciding that the expression "between the evenings" refers to a time between sunset and dark can any support be generated, and only in the original Passover account. The rest of the Old Testament passages are either neutral or support a late 14th Passover to the extent that complex arguments are often needed to explain them otherwise. Coulter's book is not long because of the abundance of evidence supporting an early 14th Passover. It is long partly because of the elaborate theses and convoluted explanations used in an attempt to explain that the Scriptures don't say what they really do say.

Since there has been so much discussion about our New Testament practice being a continuation of the Old Testament Passover, a conflict has arisen within those who clearly see that the Bible, other historic sources, and traditional practice, point to the Passover sacrifice occurring at the end of the 14th, followed by the Passover feast (the eating of the lamb) after sundown on the 15th. Some who have observed an annual memorial of Christ's death at the beginning of the 14th now begin to feel they should do so at the end of the 14th/beginning of the 15th. Yet the entire observance traditionally kept on the eve of the 14th is based on what Jesus did, so why shouldn't that include the timing as well? It is remarkable to note that during a typical

service at the beginning of the 14th, the only similarity with the Old Testament Passover seems to be the presence of unleavened bread. All of the discussion, readings, thoughts, ceremonies, symbols and time of night it is observed are entirely New Testament and focused on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The original Passover is seldom, if ever, mentioned. It is not at all difficult to conceive that Jesus did not merely give us a repackaged Passover ceremony, but an entirely new observance specifically for the New Testament Church. (Conversely, when our family gathers with others to keep a "night to be much observed" (Exodus 12:42, KJV) at the beginning of the 15th the activity is almost entirely based on the Old Testament Passover, and even the concept of meeting in homes with several families, sometimes serving lamb, is very reminiscent of the original Passover meal.)

Appendices

The second edition of Coulter's book contains a group of 20 appendices, most apparently prompted by the recognition that there are a lot of verses which cause problems with Fred Coulter's theory. Many of these verses have been cited already in this paper to point out his errors, and these appendices provide a valiant attempt to once again show that the Bible does not really say what it appears to say. Coulter was wise enough to not put these nearly incomprehensible studies of Hebrew and Greek grammar in the main part of his book, or he would have lost his audience long ago. Nevertheless, because of the seemingly scholarly nature of these studies, they can give the appearance that the author knows what he is talking about, and thus seem to add credence to his case.

One would think that an author could be quoted who would directly agree with some of the strange conclusions made in these appendices, but only bits and pieces of other authors' works are quoted, along with liberal interpretations of what they mean. Mr. Coulter's track record with outside sources does not give a sense of confidence in the strength and accuracy of his support material, or his interpretation of it. Those of us who do not have access to all of the works he cites are left to simply trust Mr. Coulter when he infers that the hundreds of translators who have worked on our variety of

English translations have repeatedly demonstrated their ignorance of Old Testament Hebrew, and that he, basing his claims on the thesis of his book, is now able to set them straight.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to address all of these appendices. Discussions of “fanciful duals”, “copulative waws”, and “genitive constructs” are nearly impossible to argue with, beyond pointing out again that these are obviously picky, and potentially made up, concepts. Most of us are at the mercy of translators of the Bible. No translations express the concepts Coulter presents here. After reading the appendices, one must wonder if there is any verse in the Bible that we can accept for what it says. For that matter, can we accept Coulter’s proof texts for what they say? Perhaps they are the only ones we can read in English and accept, but how are we to know? This is no way to establish the truth of the Bible. The broad concepts in Scripture are plain. Do we need a degree in ancient Hebrew so we can discover that the translators with degrees in ancient Hebrew have been fooling us all these centuries? Comparing translations is generally adequate, when all of the verses in question agree with each other in the truth they convey. And doing so brings us to a much different conclusion on the verses in question than Coulter’s incomprehensible statements.

These appendices emphasize a theme that has permeated our examination of Fred Coulter’s book. It is a concept that Mr. Coulter has unwittingly demonstrated time and again. The Scriptures over and over show us that the Passover is at the end of the 14th. It is only by retranslating and reinterpreting these many, many verses that he is able to force the Bible to agree with his thesis. As we have already seen, he dismisses nearly every Passover mentioned in Scripture as being aberrant in some fashion —

observed at either the wrong time or in the wrong manner. Yet if we let the Bible instruct us instead, we learn that these Passovers add to and support each other, demonstrating clearly that the Passover was a late 14th, temple-centered sacrifice. It is not necessary to twist and distort the Scriptures as translated by Hebrew and Greek scholars over the centuries.

The verses discussed in the appendices tell us that the Passover was at the end of the 14th, and it is amazing to see what great efforts one must go through to get around this fact. Most early 14th supporters seem totally unaware of the many Scriptures opposing their view. Mr. Coulter has studied this enough to know the trouble he is in, but he is persistent enough that it seems he would rather change the Bible than change his belief. I refer again to a statement I made at the beginning of this analysis: One extremely important aspect of letting the Bible instruct us is to study all of the Scriptures on a topic before jumping to a conclusion. If we do that, we will not find ourselves forced to reinterpret large portions of Scripture to match our preconceived ideas of what we think a handful of verses seem to say.

Final Analysis

The Christian Passover does not present **any** conclusive arguments for the early 14th view. In fact, a reexamination of the Scriptures has further confirmed that the Old Testament Passover sacrifice was always killed and prepared for eating on the 14th of Abib in the afternoon, and eaten as a feast when the roasting was complete some time after sundown and before midnight on the 15th. With this understanding, it becomes apparent that *our* Passover sacrifice, the Lamb of God, was slain at the proper time.

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Additional reading:

**Resolving the
Passover Controversy — Part 1** (of 2)

[When Was the Passover Sacrifice?](#) (PDF) [[HTML](#)]

By Sanford Beattie

[Counting Pentecost in 2001](#) (PDF)

(or whenever Nisan 15 is a Sunday) [[HTML](#)]

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**Understanding
Times and Seasons — Part 1**

[The Biblical Evidence about
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