

“As Often As” In I Corinthians 11:25-26

“As often as,” found in this passage, shows *unlimited repetition, undetermined frequency*. It is given simply as a statement, but is as much authority as though it had been given in the form of a command. The Greek phrase is *hosakis ean*, and is well understood in its meaning.

A.T. Robertson, in his **Grammar of the Greek N.T.**, p. 973, says that the word *hosakis*, connected with *ean* in these passages and translated “as often as,” is very specific in meaning.

“*Hosakis* is only used with the notion of indefinite repetition. It occurs four times in the N.T., (I Cor. 11:25f; Rev. 11:6), each time with *ean* and the subjunctive. These points are all obvious.”

Along with the places in I Corinthians 11:25-26, is the other appearance of the phrase in Revelation 11:6, which says: “. . .and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they shall desire.” Unlimited repetition is the meaning here, and emphasized with the addition of “as they shall desire,” leaving the decision of frequency up to the two witnesses.

Winer, who is often referred to as an authority by Thayer's Lexicon, in his **Greek Grammar**, 1892 edition, p. 308, says the following about the *Subjunctive Present*. This mood form appears with *hosakis ean* in the same clause, as Robertson points out above.

“. . .the Subj. Present for the most part denotes a frequently repeated action not limited to any particular time. . .
hosakis an (as often as) I Cor. 11:25-26.”

In *Moods and Tenses of N.T. Greek*, by Burton, beginning on page 119, is a discussion of *Conditional Relative Sentences*. He discusses *General* and *Particular* suppositions. Sub-stitute *Generic* for *General* and *Specific* for *Particular* and you have the import of his discussion. On Pages 123-124, I Corinthians 11:26 is singled out as an example of a *general* supposition, meaning *generic*. He says:

“The relative clause refers to any occurrence of a class of acts in the gen-eral present, and the principal clause states what is wont to take place in any instance of the act referred to in the relative clause. The relative clause has the

Subjunctive with AN, the principal clause the Present Indicative. . .I Cor. 11:26.”

Each of these authorities make special reference to the passage we are considering here. From the standpoint of *hosakis*, the mode being Subjunctive, and its place as a relative clause, testifies from both word and grammar to the generic nature of “as often as.” The frequency of eating the Lord's Supper is generic. Robertson says *unlimited repetition*, while Winer says *frequently repeated action not limited to any particular time*.

This does not mean there are no limitations at all. But, God must give the limitation, qualification, or allowance, and it is common for generics to have them. In this instance, the generic of frequency is limited to the first day of the week, but is the only limitation. “That day,” in Matthew 26:29, refers to a particular twenty-four period; it is specific. It is Genitive Singular, *tes hemeras ekeines*. Everywhere it is found it is specific. But “drink,” in “*when I drink it new with you,*” is Present Subjunctive, which is durative, linear action; certainly not a one time act. Winer, op.cit., p. 297, says: “. . .*the same construction is used, when the particle of time indicates a duration or a future repetition. . .*” The form he refers to appears in Matthew 26:29. What this means is that God confined the Lord's Supper to the first day of the week, but didn't confine it to only *once* on that day; beyond that limitation “as often as” is still indefinite repetition, generic as to frequency. A Christian can eat the Supper more than once on the first day of the week.

If we didn't have Acts 20:7 to identify the day Jesus was talking about in Matthew 26:29, what would “as often as ye eat and drink” authorize us to do? Well, we could eat the Lord's Supper any day of the week, at any time, *and as many times on each day as we chose*. There would be no limitations. However, when God limited us to one of those days of the week, what changed? Only the **day** of observance changed, *not the time of day nor the number of times on that day that may be allowed*.

The position taken in this paper is this: The arrangement for eating the Lord's Supper is confined to a local church assembly, to be eaten by that assembly of disciples. We must eat the Lord's Supper at least once on the first day of the week, but may eat it more than once. We can have the Lord's Supper more than once on Sunday, but each time it is observed it must follow the same specifics in regard to arrangement. The action is undefined, generic, while it was to be associated with a particular day. This is in keeping with all later statements and examples. Paul quotes Jesus from this same occasion in I Corinthians 11:25.

Deipnon

We will see in the quotations referred to in this paper that social customs in regard to meals, like all other customs, change from time to time. And the terms used to identify those customs undergo a difference in application and meaning. Quite some time before the first century, the custom was to have three meals a day. But, by the first century the custom was only two meals a day. The first was called *ariston*, and the second *deipnon*. *Ariston* identified the period from breakfast to lunch. *Deipnon* referred to supper. Some confusion exists because of the English translation into the word **Dinner**, which at some times, in our modern world, refers to the noon meal and at others to the evening meal. The meaning of the word **Dinner** has varied in English from country to country, century to century, and even now from region to region in this country. Luke 14:12 records these two meals — “When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends. . .” Here **dinner** comes from *ariston*, and **supper** from *deipnon*. The King James and American Standard, for example, both translate the terms as above. However, the New American Standard and New English Bible, translate them respectively as **luncheon**, (lunch), and **dinner**.

What is clear in Luke 14:12 is that only two meals are detailed, and in a particular order. This is in keeping with the facts of first century custom of meals. **Bullinger's Critical Lexicon**, referring to *ariston*, p. 225, points out that it means to eat any meal before the principal meal, *deipnon* (supper). He is explicit that it was always taken before *deipnon*. **Arndt & Gingrich Lexicon**, p. 106 lists, under *ariston*, two applications, namely, breakfast, and noon meal. The same is true of **Thayer's Lexicon**, p. 73, though he chooses the words **first food**. . .**breakfast**, and **dinner**, the last meaning the noon meal. **Liddell & Scott**, 1852 edition, pp. 208-209, list both the verb *aristao*, and the noun, *ariston*. They show the terms referring to breakfast and lunch, or any meal except dinner or supper. This identifies *ariston* as the morning to noon meal.

Two authorities have been the cause of controversy and misunderstanding on *deipnon*, though such misunderstanding has not been their fault. The fault has been with not taking the “context” of their statements into account. The first reference is **Bullinger's Lexicon**, p. 751. He lists *deipnon* under the word “Supper.” He says that it is the principal meal “whenever taken, but gen. towards evening.” The “whenever taken,” by itself implies that it was eaten at any time of day, even early morning, and was the main meal at such times. However, noting what Bullinger said about *ariston*, that it was “always” eaten first in the day, and **before** the *deipnon*, indicates that Bullinger has something else in mind as to the “whenever eaten.” We will better understand what that means as we continue.

The second authority is **Thayer's Lexicon**. Under *deipnon* he lists, first, that it refers to “1. *supper, esp. a formal meal usually held at evening. . .*” This is taken by some to say that since he says it is “usually” held at evening, it is not always held at evening. So, that places it as possible at other times of the day. Well, yes and no. We must understand just what he is saying. Notice that he says “*esp. a formal meal. . .*” A “formal meal” was a feast, and feasts were “usually” held at evening, but not always. Some feasts were held earlier in the day, and then they were called *ariston*. Luke 14:12 shows both terms refer to feasts. But, such a formal meal, feast, was “usually” held at evening, and when it was it answered to *deipnon*. Notice two other remarks made by Thayer. First, in the preliminary remarks he says that in the time of Homer, at least 800 B.C., *deipnon* referred to breakfast. But, concerning breakfast “the Greeks afterwards call to *ariston. . .* designating as to *deipnon* the evening meal or supper.” That is where it stands in the first century.

Liddell & Scott Lexicon, 1852, p. 314, discuss *deipnon*, showing the changes in words and their applications.

By the first century they point out that *deipnon* meant “the chief meal, answering to our dinner. . . begun towards evening, and often prolonged till night.” They also say that in the time of Homer it was used as an equal to either *ariston* or *dorpon*, the latter referring to the evening meal. However, in passage of time from Homer's time *deipnon* came to take the place of *dorpon* as the evening meal. So, note under the word *dorpon*, on page 367, that the term referred to the “after noon or evening meal, whether called dinner or supper.”

W.E. Vine's **Expository Dictionary**, p. 416, states that *deipnon* denotes “the chief meal of the day, dinner or supper, taken at or towards evening. . .” Vine obviously means the same thing by dinner as he does supper, and identifies the time area as “at or towards evening.” **Berry's Lexicon**, located in the back of **Berry's Interlinear**, p. 24, says that *deipnon* means “the chief or evening meal, supper. . .” **Arndt & Gingrich Lexicon**, p. 173, says it means “dinner, supper, the main meal (toward evening. . .” **Abbot-Smith Lexicon**, p. 100, simply says “the chief meal of the day, dinner, supper.”

What these authorities reveal is that the first meal of the day, whether a feast or common meal, either breakfast or lunch, was called *ariston*. Bullinger is specific that it was “always” the first meal of the day. The second meal of the day occurred any time after noon to late night, covering a possible period of several hours, and was called *deipnon*. This explains Bullinger's meaning of “whenever eaten,” yet confining it to that period of after noon to late evening, but generally “toward evening.” One thing is clear, *deipnon* was not eaten in the morning. The first meal of the day, the morning meal, was called *ariston*, not *deipnon*.

DEIPNON AND THE LORD'S "SUPPER"

There are two errors that have been presented based on the word deipnon (supper) as it relates to the Lord's Supper. The first is that it confines us to eating the Lord's Supper to night time only. The second is that it confines a Christian to eating the Lord's Supper to only once each Sunday; it would be a sin to eat it more than once on a Sunday. However, both of these errors have the same basic approach in that they try to apply literal characteristics to a word that the scriptures do not. If we begin indiscriminantly to apply literal characteristics to a figurative use of a word, we fall into grave error, making laws where there are none. An example of this sort of thing is found in trying to apply literal characteristics to the word "circumcision" in the New Testament in order to get infant sprinkling authorized. The Lexicons we have noticed tell us several things about the word deipnon.

1. It was the main, most important, meal of the day.
2. That being so, the largest amount of food was served and eaten.
3. Likewise, the largest variety was served.
4. It was to satisfy physical hunger.
5. It was eaten every day.
6. It was eaten anytime after noon to late night, generally evening.

The problem involves applying such characteristics from the literal to the figurative when we confront the Lord's "supper." Our only guide, or course will be the application the Scriptures make.

It's obvious from I Corinthians 11:20-33 that the word is used figuratively. The Lord's Supper is contrasted with "each one taketh. . .his own supper." Their own, as versus the supper belonging to the Lord. Their own literal, ordinary deipnon, as versus the Lord's. But, there are some very real contrasts between the two.

Points 2 and 4 go together in that the largest amount of food was served and eaten in order to satisfy hunger. That is naturally involved in the "main meal" of the day, as it would be with our own today. However, the Lord's Supper was not intended to do that. Paul said in vss. 22 and 34 that if any one was hungry he was to eat at home. What they were to eat in the Lord's Supper was small in amount, and certainly not enough to satisfy hunger.

Point 3 notes that the largest variety of food would be served at the "main meal" of the day, as would be more time in preparation of such a meal. When we look at the Lord's Supper we find only two elements, bread and fruit of the vine, eaten in small amounts. See vss. 23-26.

Point 5 is that the deipnon, main meal of the day, was eaten **every day**. However, the Lord has limited us to just one day of the week for

eating His Supper. Matthew 26:29 shows the Lord had a particular day in mind for that, and Acts 20:7 is an example of disciples doing that very thing. That day is Sunday.

Point 6 shows some time element in the deipnon. However, though a particular day is specified by the Lord for His Supper, no particular time on that day is. The Lord left it as generic authority. This is further emphasized in I Corinthians 11:25-26. **As often as** is indefinite of repetition, and hence generic. The verbs in vs. 26 are **Present Subjunctive** in form. **Winer's Grammar**, p. 308, says that it refers to a "frequently repeated action not limited to any particular time. . ." No particular time or frequency is given by the Lord outside of confining it to the first day of the week.

That leaves us with the first point given, and the only item that can be applied to the Lord's Supper — **main meal**. The Lord's Supper is something eaten, and it is very important. This is clearly seen from all passages relating to it, especially I Corinthians 11:20-34, and these are the only characteristics of deipnon that are applied in Scripture.

We cannot pick and choose the literal meanings that we want and apply them. To insist on only once a day would just as well close the morning hours before noon as a time of eating. To attempt to base either position on deipnon is to misuse the word of God and makes laws where He has not.

I CORINTHIANS 11 - PROCLAIM

The Lord's Supper is an important and prominent activity. Like everything else we do as Christians we must observe it correctly whether it be the elements, time, attitude, or arrangement. I Corinthians 11:26 gives us some instruction on more than one necessary item. It says,

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come."

But, just what does "proclaim" mean in this passage?

The original term is **katangelo**, a compound of **angelo**, meaning a message, proclamation, and a preposition, **kata**, meaning down or down to. **Angello** by itself is not found in the New Testament; it appears compounded with some preposition only. Two related words are found in the New Testament, **angellia** and **angellos**. W.E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, page 735 says that **angellia** is "akin to angello, to bring a message, proclaim, denotes a message, proclamation, news." On the next page he says that **angellos** means "a messenger, an angel, one sent."

Angello can be compounded with any preposition, each compounded word carrying the significance of the preposition used. Some of these

distinctions are discussed in the following from the commentary on I John, (1:5) by B.F. Westcott, page 15.

“*Angellein* simply ‘to bring tidings’ occurs only in John 20:18. *Anangellein* to report, with the additional idea of bringing the tidings *up to* or *back to* the person receiving them. *Apangellein* to announce with a distinct reference to the *source* or *place from* which the message comes. *Kata-gellein* to proclaim with authority, as commissioned to spread the tidings *throughout* those who hear them. In *anangellein* the recipient, in *apangellein* the origin, in *katagellein* the relation of the bearer and hearer of the message, are respectively most prominent.”

Our word in I Corinthians 11:26, **katagello** (katangellein), is specific as to some proclamation or message that is given to another “down to.” This is further seen from the Lexicons.

PARKHURST LEXICON, page 293: “to declare plainly, openly, or aloud, to proclaim, to preach, publish.” Then follows numerous passages that contain the word, including I Corinthians 11:26.

LIDDELL & SCOTT, page 886: Though primarily classical Greek gives “announce, proclaim, declare,” as the meaning, with only a passing reference to the New Testament.

W.E VINE'S EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY OF N.T. WORDS, page 888: “to declare, proclaim, is translated to proclaim in the R.V., for A.V., to shew, in Acts 16:17; 26:23; I Cor. 11:26, where the verb makes clear that the partaking of the elements at the Lord's Supper is a proclamation (an evangel) of the Lord's death.”

CRITICAL LEXICON by Bullinger, page 697: “to bring word down to *any one*, i.e. bring home to him; hence, to proclaim somewhither. *The word may contain a hint at the unknown contents of the proclamation, as well as an increased emphasis of the verb.*”

BIBLICO-THEOLOGICAL LEXICON by Cremer, page 30: “to publish somewhither, to proclaim. . .The word may contain a hint of the unknown purport of the proclamation and a strengthening of the simple verb; cf. Rom. 1:8, I Cor. ix. 14, xi.26.” The term **angelo** by itself, as we have seen, means to proclaim, announce, or publish. When it is compounded with the preposition **kata** the meaning of the word is strengthened and emphasized.

VOCABULARY OF THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT by Moulton & Milligan, page 326 “The official sense of the word ‘make proclamation with authority,’ which appears in its NT occurrences (see Westcott on I Jn 1:5), is very evident in such a psephisma as. . .”

There are three other references of importance I will get to in a moment. These lexical authorities all insist that the term means to announce, publish, openly proclaim something that is done from one

person to another. It is not done to oneself, nor by oneself alone. It can only be done with someone else involved.

CELEBRATE?

It has been argued that the word “proclaim” in I Corinthians 11:26 only means to “celebrate,” which is something a person can do by himself, eating and drinking alone. One would, to himself, celebrate the death of Christ. The word “celebrate” is defined in such a way as to make it possible to do “it” by oneself.

The **Random House Dictionary of the English Language** lists six distinct meanings of the word “celebrate.” Definition number 1 says “to observe (a day) or commemorate (an event) with ceremonies or festivities.” Number 4 says, “to perform with appropriate rites and ceremonies; solemnize.” And, number 6 is even more pointed, “to perform a religious ceremony, esp Mass or the Lord's Supper.” Perhaps any one of these can be applied to something a person can do by himself. Hence, it is argued that the Lord's Supper is just such a celebration.

As authority for such a conclusion, two references are cited. The first is **Bagster's Analytical Greek Lexicon** that primarily analyzes and lists grammatical word forms. Under our term here, *katangelo*, it just says, “to announce, proclaim, Ac. 13:38; in N.T., to laud, celebrate, Ro. 1.8.”

However, that is hardly an adequate explanation, especially in view of the passage cited, Romans 1:8, which says:

“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world.”

We could hardly substitute the word “celebrate” in this passage for “proclaimed,” meaning to perform some religious ceremony. The term “laud” might be used, but that takes us back to something declared to others.

The second reference used is **Thayer's Lexicon**, page 330. Thayer is just partially quoted and then misrepresented by those who want the Lord's Supper to be something one can do alone. Here is how it's done, quoting Thayer: “with the included idea of celebrating, commending, openly praising. . .Ro. i.8. . .I Co. xi.26.” The word “celebrating” is lifted out and defined, either by statement or implication, as something that could be done by oneself, no other person being present. But, that misrepresents what Thayer said. Notice that Thayer said, “with the included idea.” Well, *included in what?* He means *included in the definition of the word that he previously gave*, which is “**to announce, declare, promulgate, make known; to proclaim publicly, publish.**” Any idea of “celebrating” must be within the context of this definition. Indeed, meaning number 2 in the Dictionary previously noted says that *celebrate* means “*to make known publicly; proclaim.*”

Let's round out the sense and harmony of all this with the **Arndt & Gingrich Lexicon**, page 410. After defining the term to mean "proclaim solemnly," it comments "you proclaim (by celebrating the sacrament rather than with words) the Lord's death I Cor. 11:26."

I Corinthians 11:26 says that when we eat and drink we proclaim. And this is how the word "celebrate" got into the subject in the Lexicons. They did not intend to mean by the word that just a private subjective observance of the elements representing the Lord's death is all that's necessary. This is why in the King James translates the phrase reads "ye do *shew* the Lord's death." To *show* is to present it to others by what you do rather than what you say. *Young's Literal Translation* says you "show forth." The *Estes Translation* says "you announce." The *Paraphrased New Testament* says "For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup you are re-telling the message of the Lord's death, that he died for you. Do this until he comes again." Nearly all other translations use the word "proclaim." None that I know of use the word "celebrate" to translate ***katangelo***.

Let's look at the passage again. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come." "As often as" refers to indefinite repetition of something done. But, it also includes the idea that every time it is done some requirement must be met. As far as this passage is concerned, at whatever interval the Lord's Supper is eaten, every time it is eaten, it is done in such a way that "proclaims" the Lord's death. The arrangement for eating the Lord's Supper must involve more than one person; a Christian cannot eat it by himself.