



PETER MAKES A STAND

Acts 2:1-36

By: Jeffrey W. Ganthner, AIA

ABSTRACT

The exegesis of Acts 2:1-36 using primarily intertextual analysis and supported by a brief study of the inner texture as defined by Vernon Robbins (1996) identifies several key leadership principles. Autocratic, transformational, and servant leadership styles are found in this analysis. In one short sermon, Peter is proven to be an effective cross-cultural leader through his use of all three styles to a visibly hostile audience. The intertextual analysis will search for oral-scribal, cultural, social, and historical textures to gain insight into the scripture and provide a foundation for our leadership study. The exegesis of Acts 2:1-36 shows Peter as an effective leader of the apostles and early Christian community when he steps up, build a case for and makes a stand for Jesus as the Christ.

Keywords: Autocratic Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Servant Leadership

INTRODUCTION

In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit descended and filled the apostles to the extent that they “began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance” (v. 4). This event perplexed those around them and spurred Peter to stand and give a detailed explanation of what happened. Peter, as a believer, a leader, and God’s appointed spokesman, recited a complete explanation for this observed phenomenon that stirred those around them to be “cut to the heart” (Acts 2:37). The following is a brief inner textual analysis to both introduce this pericope and to provide narrational structure followed by a detailed intertextual analysis of Acts 2:1-36. Peter, as an effective leader of the apostles and follower of God, will be studied as a cross-cultural leader who modeled leadership principles of an autocratic, transformational and servant leader.

EXEGESIS OF ACTS 2:1-36

Robbins (1996) details a methodology for studying scripture through socio-rhetorical interpretation utilizing the analysis of five textures (p. 3). Similar to the Duval and Hays (2012) “Interpretive Journey,” the purpose of these types of analysis tools is dig deep into a pericope of scripture to draw accurate meaning and insight as God intended (p. 41). The first two textures from Robbins is inner texture which examines “features” of the text itself and intertexture which looks at “a text’s configuration of phenomena that lie outside the text” (p. 3). Within intertexture, there are four parts: oral-scribal (language found in other texts), cultural (“modes of understanding”), social (relationships and structures), and historical (parallel “events that occur”) (Robbins, p. 3). Each of these intertextures will be employed in this exegesis. Utilizing both inner texture to introduce the pericope combined with a detailed intertexture, we discover cross-cultural leadership principles as the “exegesis introduces another dimension into our relation to this text” (Peterson, 2006, p. 50).

An inner texture analysis of Acts 2 reveals four primary narrational units. They are as follows:

- First Narrational Unit: Acts 2:1-13, often called the “Coming of the Holy Spirit”
- Second Narrational Unit: Acts 2:14-36, where Peter gives his sermon

- Third Narrational Unit: Acts 2:37-41, where the people react to Peter's sermon
- Fourth Narrational Unit: Acts 2: 42-47, where the people developed into followers

The first two narrational units are deep with meaning and rich in leadership principles and will be used as the focus of this exegesis. Looking at these first two, we see a progression from the Spirit coming to the people, to Peter being filled and called to give clarity of the events to both those who were filled and those who observed, and finally to Peter naming Jesus as the primary reason for this event. The Spirit as a revealer of Jesus narrated by a faithful follower in Peter. The following provides an intertextual analysis of these first two narrational units.

Acts 2:1-13: First Narrational Unit

In Acts 1:6-11, we see that Jesus ascends into heaven and promises the Holy Spirit will come and give the believers "power." This promise is delivered with the start of Acts 2:1 on the day of Pentecost. Halley (1965) stated that Pentecost was called the "Feast of First Fruits" (p. 561). Haley stated that feasts like these were to "keep God in the thought of the people, and to promote national unity" (p. 152). Being together "in one place," was exactly what God wanted when the Holy Spirit came (Acts 2:1). Throughout the Bible, God moves when people are prepared for his action and gathered together. Acts 2:2 describes God acting when He brings a wind from Heaven. God uses wind to calm as in Genesis 8:1 or to bring calamity as in Exodus 15:10. God using wind was both culturally and historically significant to the people of Jerusalem. The "wind" in Acts 2:2-3 "divided tongues" and then caused them to speak in "other tongues" in Acts 2:4. Looking back at the building of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1, man had one language and then God caused confusion of their language when man "boasted" in Genesis 11:6-9. Language is important to God and is the "primary way in which God works" (Peterson, 2006, p. 61)." The wind and resulting speaking in tongues was a clear marker that this was coming from God.

In Acts 2:5-6, the "devout men from every nation" was hearing them speak in his own language." When the first dispersion occurred in Genesis 11:8, people were spread across the earth and formed nations. The historical event that focused on the dispersion of the Jews occurred when

the king of Assyria “conquered the northern kingdom of Israel” (DeSilva, 20014, p. 38). He then carried them away to “the cities of the Medes” (2 Kings: 17:6). Now Jerusalem is filled with peoples from “every nation” as they came back from places like “Medes” as referenced in Acts 2:9. As detailed in Acts 2:11, these people from all over the world were hearing those filled with the Holy Spirit “telling them” in their “own tongues the mighty works of God.” The Holy Spirit caused those who were filled to boast of God and not of man as in Genesis 11.

Some in the crowd doubted the divine work of the Holy Spirit and said, “they are filled with new wine” (Acts 2:13). The cultural understanding gleaned is that wine “take(s) away the understanding” (Hosea 4:11). Therefore, those that doubted made light of what they were saying by implying these men were drunk. The cultural analogy is even deeper when you think of these men being filled were mature and not new; therefore, when they were suddenly “filled with new wine” they burst as an old wineskin would when filled with new wine (Matthew 9:17). The cultural slight here cannot be understated.

Acts 2:14-36: Second Narrational Unit

Acts 2:14 shows that Peter is compelled to act and directly address the “Men of Judea” to clear up any confusion and to directly address the mockers. Ezra 9:9 and Jeremiah 40:11 sets both the historical and cultural context for Peter when he addresses them as “Men of Judea” or Judeans. In addition, Peter was seen “standing with the eleven” to form twelve men. This is significant to the Jews and referenced throughout the Old Testament as in Joshua 3:12. The social unit of twelve men is a direct reference to the twelve tribes of Israel.

In Acts 2:15, Peter references the time of day as a cultural proof that these men speaking in tongues are not drunk but speaking truth. The third of the hour the day was a time of work (Matthew 20:3) and it was also the time when Jesus was crucified (Mark 15:25). Time of day meant a lot in the Jewish culture as well as the widespread belief even among the early Christians (those gathered here) that Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day (Pickup, 2013, p. 542). Peter is finally ready to lead the mockers and to “awake” them to Jesus (Joel 1:5).

In Acts 2:16-21, Peter makes a direct reference to the prophet Joel. In Acts 2:17, Peter uses the oral scribble technique of recitation when he directly quotes Joel 2:28 with only a few word changes and omissions. For example, Joel states, “it shall come to pass afterward that I” while Peter changes this to “And in the last days it shall be God...” (Joel 2:28 & Acts 2:17). Peter makes it clear that it is God speaking here. Thus, God is the one who acted here and poured out the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2:18, Peter references Joel 2:29, but adds words to Joel’s text by stating that the servants “shall prophesy.” This is significant because it was socially unacceptable at the time for servants to offer wisdom and definitely not prophesy as they were called to solely serve their masters (Klein, 1982, p. 216). Through 1 Corinthians 11:5, we learn that not just servants, but women are not allowed to pray or prophesy openly (with their head uncovered).

Acts 2:19-21 relates directly to Joel 2:30-32. Peter adds clarity to the prophet Joel’s prophesy by stating that “wonders [are] in heavens above” and “signs [are] on the earth below” (Acts 2:19). Joel simply groups both together and calls them “wonders” (Joel 2:30). In Acts 2:20, Peter provides oral-scribal reference to Joel 2:31 through describing fearful events that will happen during that time. Then, Peter recites the way out from the danger by quoting precisely, in Acts 2:21, Joel 2:32 “And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

In Acts 2:22, Peter addresses the crowd as “Men of Israel” to prepare them to be introduced to Jesus and directly relate the events that they witnessed to him. The signs and wonders that Jesus performed was given by God, the Father, just as the Holy Spirit is “distributing” those gifts now (Hebrews 2:4). Note that Peter throughout this pericope calls the crowd first “Men of Judea” (Acts 2:14), then “Men of Israel” (Acts 2:22), and then later on as “Brothers” (Acts 2:29). This progression parallels Peter’s message and as he speaks he begins to get more personal and prepare his audience to be confronted with truth to make a decision. That truth is spelled out in Acts 2:23-24 when Jesus is introduced as the one “you crucified” and the one “God raised.” Later, Acts 3:26 recounts this pericope of scripture here; thus, reinforcing the thematic approach to the book of Acts.

Acts 2:25-31, introduces a foundational patriarch to the crowd in Jerusalem: King David. David's thankfulness for not having his soul abandoned to "Hades [Sheol]" is cited and linked to the current times by Peter (Psalm 16:9-10 and Romans 15:8). However, Peter goes to great length to separate King David from Jesus in Acts 2:29 by stating that David's "tomb is with us to this day" while Jesus's is not even though "Jesus can be considered to have been buried according to Jewish custom" (Lavoie et al., 1982, p.6). This differentiator is important as tombs were very present in the Jewish culture. However, Acts 2:31 states that Jesus's body did not "see corruption" unlike King David's.

In Acts 2:32-35, Peter continues with David's word by referencing David's prophesy and by directly reciting (quoting) Psalm 110:1. Peter now is ready for his finale for his case for Jesus as "Lord and Christ". Acts 2:36 concludes that they, "the house for Israel," can now "know for certain" who Jesus is and that their confusion in Acts 2:12 and "mockery" in Acts 2:13 is proven without merit. Peter, the leader and follower of God has given them the truth about Jesus.

Identified Leadership Principles from the Exegesis

Acts 2:1-36 has many leadership principles on display. Peter, God, Jesus, and David are all examples of strong leaders. Table 1, shown below, lists the leadership principles as they appear in this pericope of scripture – first modeled by God and then Peter.

Table 1

Identified Leadership Principles from the Exegesis (Acts 2:1-36)

Leadership Principle (Organized by First Appearance)	Found in Verses (Acts)
Leaders set the stage (God: autocratic)	2:1
Leaders act when followers are gathered (God: autocratic)	2:2
Followers need to be ready to receive	2:4

Followers need clear direction to avoid confusion	2:12, 2:19
Leaders stand up and go first (Peter: autocratic)	2:14
Leaders speak simple truths (Peter: transformational)	2:15
Leaders can back up their stated truths (Peter: transformational)	2:16-21, 2:22-24
Leaders are servants (Peter: servant)	2:18
Leaders speak carefully and precisely when facing risk (Peter: transformational)	2:21
Leaders make sure their followers are attentive (Peter: transformational)	2:22
Leaders reference proven and accepted leaders (Peter: transformational)	2:29
Leaders set organizational structures (God: autocratic)	2:34
Leaders conclude with clarity (Peter: autocratic/ transformational)	2:36

AUTOCRATIC, TRANSFORMATIONAL, AND SERVANT LEADERSHIP

There are three primary leadership modern leadership theories on display in Acts 2:1-36: autocratic, transformational, and servant leadership. “Autocratic leadership is when one person makes all the decisions for everybody” (Phillips, 2016, p. 17). Autocratic leadership relies solely

on the qualities of the leader to “create unity” and success rather than the organization (Segalman, 1954, p. 8). God, as an autocratic leader, did not ask for permission when He sent the Holy Spirit.

Transformational leaders set the vision and path for an organization and are really good at “empower[ing] followers” to lead an organization to success (Northouse, 2016, p. 190). Additionally, Northouse states that transformational leaders are “recognized as change agents” (p. 190). Peter, showed he was a transformational leader when addressing the people who were confused on the Day of Pentecost.

The ultimate servant leader is Jesus as described in Philippians 2 (Lundy, 2002, p. 89). Servant leadership places the emphasis on the follower by putting the “the leader in the role of the servant” (Northouse, 2016, p. 5). Servant leaders are not weak, but realize the focus has to be on serving the followers for an organization to be successful.

DISCUSSION OF LEADERSHIP ON DISPLAY

An effective leader is “competent in cross-cultural awareness and practice” (Northouse, 2016, p. 427). Globalization requires leaders to use an “arsenal of methods” to effectively lead diverse followers and organizations (Hudea, 2014, p. 46). A successful cross-cultural leader meets followers where they are and through example moves them and the organization to where it needs to go (Hudea, p. 46). Additionally, Perkins (2009) provides ample evidence that history and culture play a significant role in an effective leader’s style to reach followers (p. 76-77). Lundy (2002) states that the “context” or the situation that leaders find themselves is a major factor in determining what type of leadership is employed (p. 23). Effective cross-cultural leadership separates strong, effective leaders from failing weak leaders.

Peter while making his stand for Christ shows characteristics of an autocratic, transformational, and servant leader. He, over the course of one short sermon in Acts 2, shows us all three. First, as the autocratic leader he stands prominently “with the eleven” and addresses the “Men of Judea” (Acts 2:14). He does not delegate his responsibility as the leader to act and instead goes

first. He sees a crisis and responds. He authoritatively grabs their attention and jumps right in. He alone will take the blunt of a follower's revolt if his message fails. He acts decisively when the followers are gathered.

Peter shows his mastery of being a transformational leader almost immediately by quickly stating that these "people are not drunk" in Acts 2:15 and then pivoting their thinking by providing a defensible and well laid out solution for what they are seeing. He is acting like a change agent. The apostles in the early Church had to respond to a variety of situations, "society and, culture" around them (DeSilva, 2004, p. 37). This early encounter was a great example of Peter going to the accepted scriptures of Joel to reach his challenging audience.

Peter is seen as servant leader when he begins to personalize his message in Acts 29, by calling the crowd "Brothers." Making an appeal to them as their equal and masking his autocratic leadership style, he is able to "lead" them to be open and willing to understand the truth that Jesus is the Christ and the Holy Spirit was sent by God to help them. Peter does not show Christ from a position of weakness, but strength – he has their attention because of his effective leadership approach. Mastery of all three leadership styles and their supporting principles makes Peter an effective cross-cultural leader of believers and follower of God.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Acts 2:1-36 provides truth and sets the house of Israel up for a decision. Strong leaders provide straight forward, defensible, and well supported facts when dealing with potentially controversial situations. Peter did not panic when faced with a dangerous crowd. The intertextual analysis was critical to fully appreciate the challenge he faced. Peter showed himself as a follower of God modeling autocratic, transformational, and servant leadership characteristics of the Father and Jesus. An analysis of Acts 2:37-47 (narrational units three and four) would show how followers respond to strong leaders when faced with truth and then how followers choose to change their ways to that truth.

REFERENCES

- DeSilva, D. A. (2004). *An introduction to the new testament: Contexts, methods & ministry formation*. Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL;: InterVarsity Press.
- Duvall, J. S., & Hays, J. D. (2012). *Grasping god's word: A hands-on approach to reading, interpreting, and applying the bible* (3rd ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Halley, H. H. (1965). *Halley's bible handbook: revised edition* (24th ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House.
- Hudea, O. S. (2014). Cross-cultural leadership. *Manager*, (19), 45-52. Retrieved from <http://eres.regent.edu:2048/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.regent.edu/docview/1619354089?accountid=13479>
- Klein, R. W. (1982). A liberated lifestyle: slaves and servants in biblical perspective. *Currents In Theology And Mission*, 9(4), 212-221.
- Lavoie, B. B., Lavoie, G., Klutstein, D., & Regan, J. (1982). Jesus, the Turin Shroud, and Jewish burial customs. *The Biblical Archaeologist*, 45(1), 5-6.
- Lundy, J. D. (2002). *Servant leadership for slow learners*. Carlisle, UK: Authentic Lifestyle.
- Northouse, P.G. (2016). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (7th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Perkins, A. W. (2009). Global leadership study: A theoretical framework. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 8(2), 72-87. doi:10.12806/V8/I2/TF2
- Peterson, E. H. (2006). *Eat this book: A conversation in the art of spiritual reading*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

- Phillips, K., C.A.(S.A. (2016). Debating leadership autocratic vs democratic leadership. *Accountancy SA*, 17. Retrieved from <http://eres.regent.edu:2048/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.regent.edu/docview/1774548671?accountid=13479>
- Pickup, M. (2013). 'On the third day: the time frame of Jesus' death and resurrection. *Journal Of The Evangelical Theological Society*, 56(3), 511-542.
- Robbins, V. K. (1996). *Exploring the texture of texts: A guide to socio-rhetorical interpretation*. Valley Forge, Pa: Trinity Press International.
- Segalman, R. (1954). Autocratic leadership in the small Jewish community. *The Reconstructionist*, 19(18), 8-16.