

The History & Roots of River's Edge

Introduction.

Read Acts 1:14; 2:1-4

The experience of “Pentecost” in Acts was ongoing until the foundational truths began to decline in the early church. By 150 A.D. the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit were no longer evidenced. For centuries following, the church entered into a period known as the “Dark Ages” until God began to restore his truths. One such truth was the experience of Pentecost.

At the turn of the 20th century a Methodist evangelist, Charles F. Parham, founded a Bible School called “Stone’s Folly” in Topeka, Kansas. He gave his students an assignment from the Book of Acts to discover the *evidence* of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. The result of their findings led them into a prayer vigil to seek God for this same experience. On January 1, 1900, the Holy Spirit came on them and they all began to speak in tongues. This event grabbed the attention of newspapers with headlines that read—“Pentecost! Pentecost!” This sparked a revival across the Midwest into Southern California to a Los Angeles horse stable on 312 Azuza Street. The mission was led by a black minister named William Seymour who had heard Parham speak on the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and later received it himself.



Parham



Seymour

By 1906, people traveled from all over the world to Azuza Street to hear about Pentecost. Those who came believed and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They took their experiences and the teaching back to their own countries which generated a movement worldwide. These are the roots and the history of River’s Edge—back to a street called “Azuza”—back to an upper room in Jerusalem where 120 praying disciples were baptized in the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues on the day of their Jewish Feast called Pentecost.

A. The Pentecostals.

1. The characteristics of the “Pentecostal” movement were that of a scattered, loose, and non-descript bunch of denominational outcasts, forced to meet in run-down buildings with non-certified ministers, a lot of excitement, and camp meetings which birthed “new” revelations.
2. The Assemblies of God denomination organized out of this “Pentecostal” movement in 1914. Some of the patriarchs of that movement were E.N. Bell, J. Roswell Flowers, and Danny Welch.
3. The New Issue Conference of 1915. Since Pentecost was discovered in the Book of Acts they began to ask, “*What else is in Acts we haven’t seen?*” Water baptism became the “new” issue.
 - The *name* in water baptism became an issue in 1913 at a central California camp meeting.
 - A sector of believers rose up who began to deny the *triune* nature of the Godhead. They believed the *name* used in Acts in water baptism represented Jesus only, while the other Pentecostals believed in baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost which represented a Triune God.
 - The “Jesus Only” doctrine took hold and split the Pentecostal movement.
 - In 1915, a big debate took place in St. Louis, Missouri over this controversy. At this debate a man named William H. Offiler spoke for two hours. He attempted to resolve the issue by showing that the *name* used in water baptism in Acts did indeed represent the triune nature of God.
 - W.H. Offiler failed to persuade them, however, and the Pentecostal movement fragmented into two denominations:



W.H. Offiler

The Assemblies of God: organized to distinguish themselves from the new doctrine.

The United Pentecostal Churches: organized to embrace the “Jesus Only”— “oneness” doctrine.

B. William H. Offiler.

1. A self-educated Englishman saved in an Anglican Church.
2. Moved from England to America at age 25 and worked as a plumber.
3. He was baptized in the Holy Spirit in Spokane, WA during the early days of the Pentecostal Movement which had spread out of Stone's Folly into the Northwest.
4. He received a miraculous healing in his decaying jawbone at the end of a three week fast (Offiler's Testimony in the Addendum).
5. In 1914, in Glacier National Park, the Lord gave him several visions (one was a vision of WWI being started by Kaiser Wilhelm). He also received a vision that was calling him to the ministry which led him to Seattle, WA.
6. He became the pastor of a few spirit-filled saints in an old mission in Seattle and later named the church, Bethel Temple.
7. Revival came and lasted for eight years with astounding miracles & healings.
8. He prayed often side-by-side with his famous evangelist friend, Smith Wigglesworth.
9. He was a dynamic teacher and Bethel Temple grew to a peak attendance of 1800 people.
10. He established a Bible College to train and equip future pastors and missionaries.
11. He sent out church planting teams, as well as many missionaries to Indonesia.



W.H. Offiler

C. Richard C. Benjamin.

1. Saved in Offiler's church at the age of 20 in 1945 and later baptized in the Holy Spirit.
2. Studied three years in Offiler's Bible College, later attended Foursquare Bible College in L.A.
3. Moved to Anchorage, Alaska to help his father-in-law with a mission church sent out of Bethel Temple. After a number of years, the Lord directed Dick to plant a church himself.
4. Abbott Loop Community Chapel (ALCC) had its first service in an old Quonset hut in 1959 with four families. Over the next 13 years—to 1972—the church had grown steadily to 400 people.
5. From 1972-1973, ALCC doubled to 800 people from the hippies saved in a *Jesus Movement*.
6. Many miracles and healings took place during this time, similar to the early days of Offiler.
7. In 1973, the Lord directed Dick to prepare for sending out teams to plant churches.
8. Over the next 15 years, 1500 members—comprising 60-plus teams—were sent into the nation & other parts of the world.



Benjamin

D. Jay & Roseann Zinn.

1. During the *Jesus Movement*, Jay was saved at the age of 20 in January of 1972 & baptized in the Holy Spirit while serving in the Air Force, in Fort Walton Beach, FL. Roseann was saved at the age of 19 in 1974, in ALCC in Anchorage, AK and was later baptized in the Holy Spirit.
2. God called Jay to pastor in 1973, and a month later he received orders to Anchorage, Alaska.
3. When he arrived in Anchorage, God led Jay to ALCC where he met Roseann and, in May of 1974, they were married.
4. In 1976, Jay was ordained by ALCC and sent out as the 24th team to plant a church in Florida.
5. They planted their 2nd church in Minnesota in 1986, and their 3rd church in Davidson, NC in 1999.
6. In 1999, Dick Benjamin resigned and released the network of churches to join other networks.
7. Pastor Kris & Lori Kawulok came to help build the church in January 2000 from Phoenix, AZ
7. In 2002, *Vanguard International* was formed as a network to continue the legacy passed down from W.H. Offiler and Dick Benjamin. Jay was one of the founding members of the leadership team of Vanguard International and now heads up a spin-off network called *Vanguard Network International*.



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