

## **PART 2:**

### **ACT 2: THE MOVE**

Let's fast forward to the late 1940s. His parents separate and he moves all the way to Richmond, Indiana with his mother.

As a child, his visits to Richmond deeply shaped his religious fascinations.

Each summer, he attended Pentecostal revivals - with sprawling tents and voices that made crowds sway, as if responding to an ancient trance. These programmes offered something that Jones never had at home: structure and certainty. And he believed that, maybe, if he could stand in front of a crowd, he would never be powerless again.

In high school, Jones was known for his indisputable academic record. He showed up to school in his Sunday best, like a man of ministry and condemned the world.

When his friends talked about dances, shows and alcohol, he talked about avoiding the world's temptations and tried to convince his friends to do Bible Study with him instead.

When classmates chattered, he rarely responded unless he was the one to start the conversation - a habit that turned every conversation into a concert and didn't really win him any friends. Either way, most of his classmates just never felt very close to him.

After high school, Jones heads to college, graduates and starts working in the hospital. Coincidentally, that's where he met Marceline Baldwin, a nurse.

But the hospital was temporary. The pulpit was the goal.

Jones moves to Indianapolis with his wife to pursue ministry and gets accepted into a traditional Methodist church - a church so different from the fiery spirit churches of his childhood. Advocating for racial equality, he invites black families to the Methodist Church. But the white congregation wasn't ready to embrace full integration.

So they made it clear he wasn't wanted in their church, which was not ready for Jones' visionary ideals.

### ACT 3: THE CHURCH

Jones leaves mainstream Pentecostal & Methodist ties and establishes his own new church, Wings of Deliverance which was later renamed to People's Temple in Indianapolis in the mid-1950s.

He observed Pentecostal-faith healing techniques made a lot of money and used that as a means to draw crowds.

Some of these ‘so-called’ healing services were staged, carefully orchestrated to exploit the trust and hope people had in him, healing people’s arms and legs, while assistants hurried behind the scene to make everything real.

Jones’ People Temple was the ideal church - running soup kitchens, daycares, medical help programmes and other humanitarian services that framed the institution as racially progressive and integrated.

In addition to these “charity services”, Jones delivered dramatic sermons on equality and that put the limelight more on him and not God. Many Blacks and low-income followers loved him for his charisma, his smile, his commitment.

But the very traits that drew followers in – his charm, his seeming benevolence – would soon be used to deepen his control. As the Temple climbed, the demands became heavier and the line between devotion and obedience became inconspicuous.

In 1965, Jones moved his church to Redwood, California where the seeds of his manipulation truly began to germinate. Members were increasingly pressured to donate wages, savings and even sell properties for the Church. On top of financial slavery, they were obligated to commit extensive hours to the Temple’s political/social work.

Jones used guilt, fear and occasional kindness to keep his followers in line. What looked like a goodwill mission masked a calculated system of control.

Then came the Wednesday night sessions. Jim held public confession sessions where members were forced to admit “sins” in front of the congregation. Punishment for their crimes ranged from harsh verbal criticism to humiliating disciplinary actions to “correct” them.

Members’ social world also significantly shrank. Jones taught them that everyone outside the Church was an “enemy” and was not to be trusted.

Ex-members later described Jones' behavior as increasingly erratic. He reportedly depended on stimulants to maintain constant energy for sermons and his political work, exacerbating his paranoia and impulsive decisions. They claim that he overstepped boundaries with followers- both male and female and sometimes even paired with married couples to enforce loyalty and control.

It was a world where devotion and fear were intertwined - and escape seemed impossible. Yet cracks were forming in the Temple's carefully constructed world. Some members eventually snapped out of the illusion, speaking to the press, revealing the coercion, the financial manipulation, and the sexual exploitation ... and in essence, all the evidence needed to destroy the Temple beyond repair.

Local authorities and newspapers also start investigating these irregularities, drawing political attention.

It seemed like all that Jim Jones had built was crumbling before his eyes - however, he had one more trick up his sleeve. To escape scrutiny and regain control, he sent his loyal 'pioneers' to Guyana, South America to build a new community, a utopia for Temple members —Jonestown, where hope and devotion would soon collide with fear and control.