

## Resurrection Church Bible Study

### TOPIC: Autopsy of a Deceased Church

Wednesday, October 16, 2019

#### INTRODUCTION:

Once again Thom Rainer explores a common theme that plagues churches all over the world. Those who make up the church have forgotten what the church is supposed to be about. In this book, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, we will discover what causes a church to die, and the signs that indicate death is imminent.

#### THE AUTOPSY:

Autopsies are performed on humans to find out why they died.

A forensic pathologist performs an autopsy to discover how a murder was committed or how an accident happened.

We are going to examine 14 church autopsies, they are of all denominations, demographics, location, etc.

Matthew 16:18 Jesus say, <sup>18</sup> ***And I tell you that you are Peter,<sup>[b]</sup> and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades<sup>[c]</sup> will not overcome it.***

#### SLOW EROSION:

Tom's small hometown

The slow erosion of churches...

Gradual decline: vibrant ministries, prayer lives, connection with the community

Haggai 1:2-4 <sup>2</sup> ***This is what the Lord Almighty says: "These people say, 'The time has not yet come to rebuild the Lord's house.'<sup>3</sup> Then the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: <sup>4</sup> "Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?"***

They returned to a devastated town; they began to lay the foundation to build the temple, but they stopped working on the temple to build their own homes for their own comforts.

God wanted to know why they didn't notice the decline of the temple while they were building their own homes.

Haggai 1:9 ***"You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?" declares the Lord Almighty. "Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with your own house.***

## **PAST IS THE HERO**

There are several points in decline where the church can turn around, but the key influencers refuse to listen. They are blinded to the *slow erosion* that was taking place.

## **THE AUTOPSY: The Common Thread**

They often *cling* to things of the *past* with desperation and fear. When any internal or external force tries to change the past, they respond with anger and resolution: “We will die before we change.” And they did.

They were fighting for the past. The good old days. The way it used to be. The way we want it today.

***Areas We Cling To:*** worship styles, facilities, pastors of the past, our own needs rather than the needs of those without Christ, and the way we have always done things.

## **EVERYONE LOVES A HERO**

According to the writer of Hebrews, all of these men and women were heroes of faith because they obeyed God even though they did not know the consequences of that obedience.

The “good old days” did not exist in their minds. The future held the best days. They understood that this life is not a time to get comfortable.

## **WHEN THE PAST IS HERO**

Yes, we *respect* the past. At times we *revere* the past. But we can't *live* in the past.

Unlike the heroes of Hebrews 11 who held onto *nothing* of this life, these dying churches held onto *everything*, at least everything that made them comfortable and happy. They were warned. They were facing certain death. They saw every sign. They preferred death to change. And death is what they got.

**PRAYER:** God, give me the conviction and the courage to be like the heroes of Hebrews 11. Teach me not to hold onto those things in my church that are my personal preferences and styles. Show me not only how to let go, but where to let go, so that I may heed Your commands more closely.