

predictive of all sorts of churches in all ages. There may be some cumulative effect...I am dubious about an overall development of the total body. We can learn tons of lessons from this area, however.

1. The Ephesian Church 2:1-7

--it will serve, test, and endure

--it will be disaffected and schismatic

There is almost a corollary here...the more a work seeks to epitomize fidelity the more easily it becomes a product of systems, methods, programs and invention.

--the challenge is to repent and return.

2. The Smyrna Church 2:8-11

--it will work and suffer

--it will be ill-accused

When troubles really strike, the temptation is to alter the truth of the testimony just enough to get by.

--the challenge is to be faithful...

3. The Pergamos Church 2:12-17

--it holds a testimony and will suffer and some will die

--but it is not pure in doctrine or in practice

While we do not wish to become theological hairsplitters, the need of correct doctrine and practice is vital to being what the Lord wants us to be. Failure in this area will soon doom a local testimony.

--the challenge is to repent and, obviously, to turn

4. The Thyatira Church 2:18-29

--it is a working church

--it tolerates evil and makes atrocious compromises in a service area that is grounded more in doing than in being

Wicked compromise is the death of a vital testimony although it may take awhile for the death pains to be obvious.

--the challenge is to hold fast and to overcome.

5. The Sardis Church 3:1-6

--it has a minor number of faithful

--it is marked by hypocrisy and imperfect works

Faithfulness is more important than "success". (This cannot be an excuse for failure, of course) Prophetically the Sardis church found it easier to make great claims than to be and do good.

--the challenge is to be watchful, remember, and repent.