

Ephesians is closely related to Colossians; it may have been written soon after Colossians while the themes and ideas of that letter were still on Paul's mind and heart. He may have adapted his specific concerns for the Colossian church to a general audience and set both letters, along with Philemon, by the same messenger (Eph. 6:21-22; Col. 4:7-8).

Colossians is included in the canon of Marcion (c. AD 140) and its authenticity was not challenged until the 19th century. This challenge had two main thrusts --the presence of Gnostic ideas (Gnosticism was a second-century heresy) and its doctrine of Christology--as well as the usual literary arguments of vocabulary and style.

Paul is not, however, attacking Gnosticism in its fullest form, but what is known as "incipient Gnosticism" of the first century. While it is true that Paul's Christology nowhere else reaches the height of "cosmic reconciliation" found in 1:20, this is not antithetical to Paul's other expositions of Christ's person, merely a step further than they. The strongest argument for Pauline authorship (since the explicit references of 1:1, 23; 4:18 are usually dismissed as pseudonymous) is the letter to Philemon. The same persons are addressed by each (Col. 4:7-17; Phile. 2, 23, 24) and Onesimus, the main topic of Philemon, is "one of y8ou" (Col. 4:9). These seem to show that both epistles were written by the same person. The authenticity of Philemon is unchallenged: Colossians is therefore likewise trustworthy.

Traditionally, Colossians was written from Rome during Paul's imprisonment (cf. 4:18). It was probably written shortly before Ephesus (c. AD 60-61) and sent to Colossae, a decaying city in central Asia, along with Ephesians and Philemon.

Paul wrote Colossians to correct a heresy threatening the Colossian Christians. This heresy seems to have been a mixture of Jewish elements (2:16, 17, 20-23) with Greek (2:8, 18) which demoted Christ to a position of being only one among many supernatural powers (cf. 1:15-20) and elevated the teachers as the sources of "true wisdom" (cf. 2:2-4, 8).

Outlines:

Ephesians, like many of Paul's Epistles, has a two-part outline:

- I. God's eternal plan of redemption 1-3
- II. God's pattern of redeemed life 4-6

These divisions are often expressed as doctrinal/practical