Background of the Book of Colossians

1) WHO IS CONSIDERED THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK AND WHY?
The external testimony to the Pauline authorship of Colossians is ancient and consistent. The internal evidence is also very good; it not only claims to have been written by Paul (1:1, 23; 4:18), but the personal details and close parallels with Ephesians and Philemon strengthen the case.

2) WHEN WAS THE BOOK WRITTEN? WHAT WHERE THE CIRCUMSTANCES
Paul wrote this epistle from prison, as he did Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon. Although Caesarea and Ephesus have been suggested as possible locations of authorship, the bulk of evidence suggests that Paul wrote it in A.D. 60 or 61 during his first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28:16–31) and sent it with Tychicus and the converted slave Onesimus to Colosse (4:7–9; cf. Eph 6:21; Philem. 10–12).
The Leader of the Church, Epaphras, travelled about 1000 miles to see Paul and received his advice because the Church was facing major false teaching. This teaching combined Jewish Legalism (2:16) and Oriental Mysticism (2:8); along with Greek Philosophy. And many other false teachings were creeping into the Church of Colosse and Paul wrote this letter to unmask those teaching and also to command the Church to hold fast to the truth and Holy living.

3) TO WHOM WAS THE BOOK ADDRESSED?
The Book was written to the saints of Christ in Colosse and was requested to be read to the Church of Laodecia.

4) WHAT WAS THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THE BOOK?
The main purpose of this book was to give Preeminence to Christ and to unmask the false doctrines.

5) WHAT IS THE MAJOR THEME OF THE BOOK?
The resounding theme in Colossians is the preeminence and sufficiency of Christ in all things. The believer is complete in Him alone and lacks nothing because “in Him dwells all the fullness
of the Godhead bodily” (2:9). The first part of the epistle is an exposition of Christ’s supremacy (chs. 1–2); the second part explains the implications of Christ’s supremacy in terms of the believer’s submission to Christ the Lord (chs. 3–4). At also addresses the opposition and false teaching along with instructions to Christian living.

6) **OVERVIEW OF CONTENT?**

Epaphras, one of Paul’s converts, founded the church in Colosse (1:7; 4:12;13); Paul had never been there personally (2:1). While imprisoned in Rome, Paul heard that false doctrines were being introduced in the church, so he wrote this letter to warn the believers and to establish them in the faith. The key theme is the preeminence of Christ (1:18) because the false teachers made Christ one of several emanations from God. They mixed Christian truth with their doctrines of Jewish legalism and Oriental mysticism. Colossians is the perfect answer to the so-called New Age movement today, for it affirms that in Jesus Christ believers are complete and have the fullness of God available to them (2:9–10). Chapters 1–2 are doctrinal and present Jesus Christ as the preeminent Creator, Savior, and Lord. Chapters 3–4 are practical and show how the believer works out the preeminence of Christ in daily living.

7) **SPECIAL LITERARY FEATURES OR CIRCUMSTANCES?**

*Special Literary features:* the theme of the book is stated poetically and then developed further: in 1:15-20 and 2:6ff. There are also other special literary features such as

**a)** The unusual number of genitival combinations, Col.3:24; 2:11,19; 1:27.

The possessive case / genetive case is used to show ownership; eg (David's website.)

The good news is that the genetive case is used less and less in English today.

You may still hear someone say something like "The mother of the bride," but it could equally be; "The bride's mother."

However, the possessive pattern ('s) is generally used when indicate a relation of ownership or association with a person, rather than a thing.

**b)** The style is more labored and there are more subsidiary clauses than in his earlier epistles.
c) Many new words are used, while many well-known Pauline ideas are missing (55 words do not occur in Paul's other writings and 34 are hapaxes

hapax: a word or phrase that appears only once in a manuscript, document, or particular area of literature).

**Special Characteristics:** Many similarities exist between Ephesians and Colossians. The major distinction between is that Ephesians the emphasis is on the church as the body of Christ, and in Colossians the emphasis is on the Christ as the head of the body. stylistically Colossians is somewhat tense to be more specific and concrete, while Ephesians is more general and abstract. The mood of Colossians is argumentative and controversial, that of Ephesians clam and peaceful. The former is a letter of discussion and the latter is a letter of reflection.

8) **HOW IS THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK APPLICABLE FOR TODAY?**

Once we understand the preeminence of Christ we will realize that our fullness is in Him; and that we need not seek and will not find perfection anywhere else. That is “In Him” we are complete and we are to be “IN HIM” in order for the Holy Spirit to continue His work within our heart and life. We are to continue to remain in Him, by placing our faith exclusively in Christ and Him crucified. There is no life outside of Him, because He is the life (not just the source, but the very essence of life). We also learn that faith in works, or in any other than Christ and Him crucified will not bring salvation or sanctification. As we believe in God's plan of salvation, the Holy Spirit will continue His work in us and help us to mature and grow in our walk with the Lord; and also will help us to live a Holy and acceptable life unto God.