

conclude (as do many scholars) that it is a historical event in Jesus' life?

### Archaeology

The papyri mentioned in the opening paragraphs were discovered in Egypt and are dated prior to AD 150. One, containing John 18:31-33 and 37-38, is the earliest fragment of the New Testament yet discovered. When the Samaritan woman spoke of worship of "this mountain" (4:20), she was probably referring to the remains of the Samaritan temple still visible at that time on top of Mt. Gerizim. The pool of Bethesda was north of the temple mount or perhaps slightly east. The reddish tint of the water probably gave rise to the legend of its curative powers.

An ossuary (contained for bones of the dead) of someone named Jochanan, found in northeast Jerusalem, gives some explanation of Jesus' crucifixion. A four-and-one-half inch nail still impales the heelbones. The arm bones, not the palms of the hands (the word in 20:27 can also mean arm), show nail holes. The leg bones had also been shattered (19:31-32).

John also contains place names and descriptions. At one time there were considered to have been inventions of the author, either because of some theological significance or some "proof" that he was an eyewitness. Excavations in Jerusalem, however, have shown that the author of John must have been in the city before it was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70 because his descriptions could not have been accurate after that date.

### Keys:

Two passages explain John. The prologue and the author's motive for writing (20:30-31) provide the themes around which the entire Gospel is constructed. Most important, however, is Jesus teaching about himself--large blocks of such material are found throughout John as in no other Gospels

### Study tips:

Read through John at one sitting. Read it a second time in a different version to see the familiar stories in a different light. Use a Bible dictionary or encyclopaedia and a Bible atlas to find out more about unfamiliar names and places. The "I AM" sayings of Jesus are perhaps most familiar from John (some are recorded here only). Seven are called "Great Metaphors". What are those metaphors and what did Jesus intend to teach by them?