

A History of Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths

Karen Armstrong (2005)

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Back cover

'This book should be read, not only by travellers and potential travellers in Jerusalem, but by all of us. Jerusalem remains the most remarkable place in the world and Karen Armstrong is as good a guide as we could want'

DAILY TELEGRAPH

Jerusalem has cast more of a spell over the human imagination than any other city in the world. Held by the faithful to contain the mountain upon which Abraham offered up Isaac, the site of the Hebrew Temple, the hill of Christ's crucifixion, the tomb of the Virgin Mary and the rock from which the Prophet Muhammed ascended to heaven, the city has been celebrated and revered for centuries by Jews, Christians and Muslims. Karen Armstrong's elegant study of this most contested and beautiful of cities introduces us with eloquence and passion to a difficult and complex place, the crossroads, and too often battleground, of world's three greatest religions. It has never been more relevant than in this era of Middle Eastern conflict.

'A luminous history of Jerusalem . . . Armstrong's book, imbued with sympathy for all three religions, added to careful scholarship and deep knowledge of theology and history, is a triumph' *LONDON REVIEW OF BOOKS*

Amazon reviews

Karen Armstrong has written a book which is both informative and enjoyable to read. She takes us from the first settlements in this area right up to the present day. She shows us how important the ownership of both land and buildings has been and is to the occupants of this city. Throughout its history there has been a struggle for ascendancy between Jews, Christians and Muslims. Various holy buildings have been demolished, added on to or built over as they have passed between the different religions. Not only disputes between the different faiths but also amongst the different Christian sects. The author gives a very fair and balanced account and helps the reader, who may be looking at Jerusalem from a western Christian point of view, to have a better understanding of the Muslims position. She points out that when Saladin took Jerusalem from the crusaders the Christians were allowed to leave and were not slaughtered, even though this meant some of them left for the coast in order to carry on fighting. I would say this book is essential reading for anyone hoping to understand the dilemma that Jerusalem poses today and how peace in the Middle East will only come when Jerusalem is at peace.

While this is a superb, fair-minded and empathetic history of the city which will be enlightening to all except very knowledgeable specialists, it is at the same time Karen Armstrong's meditation on the "sacred geography" conceived by the three faiths in its spiritual and its material form. She is very sympathetic to and receptive of the spiritual ideals of all three faiths, and is dismayed by how so often they have all been debased by bitter rivalries (between as well as within religions), by demands for exclusivity and domination, as well as by the "idolatry to see a shrine or a city as the ultimate goal of religion". This is something the wisest theologians - few, alas, in number - have taught. At the same time, however, a material shrine is one expression of one's spiritual identity, so that the perceived threat or the destruction of a shrine - let alone expulsions and exile - are experienced as violations of one's spiritual identity. She shows that the potency of religious symbolism is such that even secular nationalism (to which she perhaps does not pay quite enough attention) has recourse to it. She shows how the best periods in the history of the city have been those few when the rulers of one faith or ethnicity have respected the faith, ethnicity and buildings of another. She is not optimistic that such wisdom is available in Jerusalem in the near future.

A gripping book, that opened my eyes about the Jewish, the Christians and Muslims. I have learnt and understood more about this city with so much violence in its history and turmoil that affects us today. It should be compulsory for all politicians to read this book; all decent and pious people should also make an effort to read this fantastic book before attempting to understand the complexity of God and his "holy" City. If anything, the objectivity and effort of the author puts her above the ordinary scholars.

Save for Later Save A History of Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths For Later. Create a List. Download to App. Jerusalem has probably cast more of a spell over the human imagination than any other city in the world. Held by believers to contain the site where Abraham offered up Isaac, the place of the crucifixion of Christ and the rock from which the prophet Muhammed ascended to heaven, Jerusalem has been celebrated and revered for centuries by Jews, Christians and Muslims. Such is the symbolic power of this ancient city that its future status poses a major obstacle to a comprehensive regional peace in the Middle East. In this comprehensive and elegantly written work, Karen Armstrong traces the turbulence During its long history, Jerusalem has been attacked 52 times, captured and recaptured 44 times, besieged 23 times, and destroyed twice. The oldest part of the city was settled in the 4th millennium BCE, making Jerusalem one of the oldest cities in the world. Given the city's central position in both Israeli nationalism and Palestinian nationalism, the selectivity required to summarize more than 5,000 years of inhabited history is often influenced by ideological bias or background The "claim to Jerusalem", while a very touchy subject and one fraught with the landmines of what constitutes a claim, is presented with her usual bias towards Muslims, largely ignoring the very clear historical fact that it was the Jewish temples upon which all others were later built. Very readable and complete, worth adding to your library if you can take it for what it's worth and balance the information with other sources. Over all, Karen has managed to write an excellent book on the history of the city of Jerusalem. Unlike other "historians" who's prejudice is clear in their work, especially on the Crusade histories, karen's book here is easily understood & far from bias. I find this book to be very objective in dealing with the various elements & people who came to that troubled city. Start by marking "Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths" as Want to Read: Want to Read savingâ€¦ Want to Read. Written with grace and clarity, the product of years of meticulous research, Jerusalem combines the pageant of history with the profundity of searching spiritual analysis. Like Karen Armstrong's A History of God, Jerusalem is a book for the ages. "The best serious, accessible history of the most spiritually important city in the world." - -The Baltimore Sun. One City Three Faiths. Karen Armstrong. Dedication (#ulink_296ab0e6-ce19-59b1-9b5c-478f6d106eb4). For my mother, Eileen Armstrong. Contents. For Jews, the possession of the Holy City continues to have healing power; they see Jewish Jerusalem rising phoenix-like from the ashes of Auschwitz. In constant danger from suicide attacks, an increasing number of Israelis can no longer imagine sharing the city with the Palestinians. Muslims also feel beleaguered as a result of the "war against terror" launched by the United States after September 11. Many see the loss of Muslim Jerusalem as a symbol of their impotence in the modern world. In the United States, the Christian Right has also hardened its position.