

UNDER JERUSALEM: Author’s book digs into what’s below historic city

Sacred to three faiths and revered by more than half the people on the planet, the city of Jerusalem conjures up powerful images of the celestial. Beneath its narrow alleys and holy places, however, the ancient city conceals a

labyrinthine, three-dimensional time capsule recording five millennia of bustling prosperity and brutal war — not to mention repeated religious innovation that altered the course of human history.

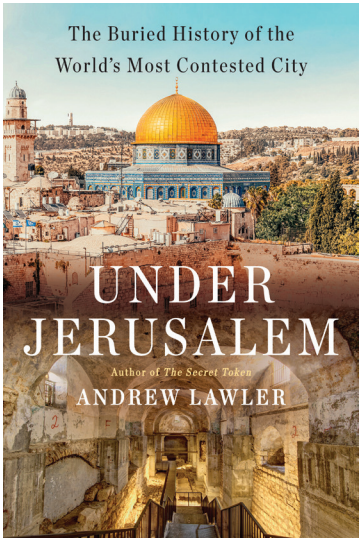
That’s what Andrew Lawler wanted to explore.

He did — for his just-released book, “Under Jerusalem: The Buried History of the World’s Most Contested City” — and he’ll discuss the work, at an event at McIntyre’s Books in Fearington Village in Pittsboro on Nov. 6. It’ll be held at 11 a.m.; for more information, visit www.mcintyresbooks.com/event/andrew-lawler-discusses-under-jerusalem.

Lawler, a contributing writer for Science magazine and a contributing editor for Archaeology, is also the author of the bestselling “The Secret Token: Myth, Obsession, and the Search for the Lost Colony of Roanoke,” as well as the acclaimed “Why Did the Chicken Cross the World?: The Epic Saga of the Bird that Powers Civilization.” His work has appeared in The New York Times, The Washington Post, National Geographic, and Smithsonian.

Kai Bird, a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian and author, has called Under Jerusalem “a brilliant, highly innovative history of the most contested city on the planet.”

“Andrew Lawler,” he wrote, “uses these untold stories of archaeological digs near and under Jerusalem’s sacred sites to convey all the colorful and violent and contentious history of



the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is an astounding achievement — and a compulsive read.”

The News + Record spoke with Lawler about “Under Jerusalem,” which was ranked on Publisher Weekly’s list of Top 10 history books for 2021, and details how archaeological digs in Jerusalem have fueled religious conflicts, shed light on the ancient world, and helped shape the modern city.

Let’s start with a basic question: Is “Under Jerusalem” a history book or an archeology book?

Both — and a bit more! This is the story about how Jerusalem went from being a sleepy pilgrimage town to the world’s most hotly contested city. And that is a tale that involves politics and religion as well as archaeology and history.

What would students of each enjoy most about the book? (And what would history lovers enjoy about the archaeological elements, and vice versa?)

What I think all readers will find most compelling are the characters I came across — both living and dead. They make the word “colorful” seem pale. You have British aristocrats, Australian millionaires, mystical rabbis, French senators, and atheist Zionists, all trying to find

IF YOU’RE GOING

Event date: 11 a.m. to noon, Saturday, Nov. 6
Location: McIntyre’s Books, 220 Market Street, Fearington Village.
Admission: \$5 ticket required; the cost of your ticket can be put toward a purchase of “Under Jerusalem” at McIntyre’s on the day of the event.

both spiritual as well as material and scientific treasure.

What led you there, to Jerusalem, and to write this book?

Naivete. I’ve covered archaeological digs in many Middle Eastern countries, but was also wary of Jerusalem given its political and religious turmoil. But when an Israeli archaeologist gave me a tour of the underground city, I couldn’t resist learning more. National Geographic assigned me to do a story on this subterranean landscape, but even after that was published, I was eager to know more. Little did I know that the topic would hold me captive for three or so years.

Is there a more historical city on Earth than Jerusalem? Why or why not?

There are plenty of ancient cities with impressive histories — think Rome, Xian, or Mexico City. But none of these can match Jerusalem with its 5,000 years of religious innovation and a long and bloody list of sieges, battles, and utter destruction — along with some of the world’s most sacred shrines. And unlike most old cities, the past here is always very present.

What do you think is most misunderstood about Jerusalem — and what from your work here would help shed light on clarifying those misunderstandings?

I was stunned to learn that

it was Western Christians, mainly Protestants, who started the scramble for Jerusalem. They arrived to dig up biblical remains in Jerusalem as part of a wider effort by colonial powers to dominate the city. This idea of recovering evidence of the Old Testament past was later passed on to Jews who emigrated to the Holy Land, and became central to Zionist identity. This set the stage for today’s conflict with Palestinians, who, like Israeli Jews, claim Jerusalem as the capital of their nation.

How was your personal story, and your faith, impacted by researching and writing the book?

Everyone who comes to Jerusalem, whether raised Christian, Jewish, or Muslim, arrives with images and beliefs of this holy place instilled since childhood, and I was no exception. My job as a writer was to step into the fray, aware of my own personal beliefs but determined not to advocate for any one group or faith.

After seeing what archaeologists are finding beneath its streets, I came away convinced that each faith is today a result of its interactions with the other two, much as Jerusalem’s architecture is a mix of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim styles. And I can envision a day when scientific results can provide the basis for believers to share a place that billions hold sacred.

Jerusalem’s history is as old as time itself. How did you decide to structure the book to capture that history, that story, and the revelations about the city’s tombs, tunnels and trenches?

There are plenty of books detailing the complicated history of Jerusalem. I took a different approach. What interested me was the people who searched beneath its surface, beginning with a French politician in the 1860s until the Israeli archaeologists digging today. Along

the way, of course, we get to discover the city’s history as the excavators exposed it.

How was the research experience into a city with that much history?

Overwhelming. You could spend your life reading what has been written about Jerusalem. Fortunately, I had plenty of help from scholars and access to some extraordinary archives. They helped keep me from going down too many rabbit holes.

Do you have a favorite story from your experience in writing the book?

I spent most of my time living in the Christian Quarter of the Old City. One day, while shopping in the local grocery store off the Via Dolorosa, the Muslim owner asked me who I was, since I was hanging around longer than the average tourist. When I told him, he walked to the potato-chip aisle, raised a metal hatch, and vanished. I followed down a rickety ladder and found myself in a vast Crusader hall next to the Holy Sepulchre — and learned about a fierce fight and a 20-year-long legal battle between the shopkeeper and Christian monks over who owned the enormous space. This became a whole chapter in my book. That’s Jerusalem — just when you think you know what’s beneath your feet, you encounter something surprising.

What will you share during your visit to McIntyre’s?

I will share lots of images from beneath the city that provide people with a sense of the enormity of subterranean Jerusalem, as well as some insights into the big questions scholars have tried to answer, from the actual burial site of Jesus to the lost city of Solomon.








CHATHAM PARK



And the winners are (drumroll please)...David Weekley and Garman Homes! Chatham Park is proud to announce that both of our Parade Home builders were recognized at the 2021 Parade of Homes Gala hosted by The Home Builders Association of Durham, Orange, & Chatham Counties. David Weekley Homes brought home Gold in its category for the Careywood model and Garman Homes was awarded Silver in another category for its No Little Plans design.

Both homes are located in Vineyards at Chatham Park. David Weekley showcased the Careywood, a beauti-

fully decorated model home featuring 3 bedrooms and 2.5 bathrooms over 2,300+ square feet. Enjoy a wonderfully open and airy first-floor living space and impeccable trim details throughout the home. The Barnaby, part of Garman Homes’ Quotables Collection, is the America At Home Study Concept Home. This innovative floor plan boasts over 2,600 square feet with 4-bedrooms and 3.5-bathrooms and even has a secret room (we just can’t tell you where!).



In addition to the awards, Chatham Park experienced three successful Parade weekends due to beautiful

weather, well-executed events, and a steady stream of visitors to the community. During our public event, visitors were able to enjoy food trucks, a caricature artist and participate in a fun scavenger hunt. Participants turned in their registration cards at the MOSAIC Comes Alive event to receive a Chatham Park goodie bag.

Over the three Parade weekends, more than 660 people (including 230 Realtors) toured the Vineyards and MOSAIC Information Center to learn about our community, amenities, and custom homes nearing completion. We are pleased to announce that the festivities resulted in five homes sold by David Weekley, two homes sold by Garman Homes, and a custom home sale for Walker Design Build.

As supporters of the popular home tour, we recognize the opportunity to highlight not just our homes but our community as a whole. From our convenient location and stunning views to our myriad of amenities and retail spaces, we know you are going to love what Chatham Park has to offer.

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