

Portland **Metro/Religion** Observer

Have a Happy Father's Day

# Armageddon: Disagreements about a famous place

ASSOCIATED PRESS

It's one of those biblical places everyone has heard of: Armageddon, site of a raging battle between the forces of good and evil at the end of time. Armageddon is named only once, in Revelation 16:16, which says three demonic spirits will assemble the world's kings "at the place which is called in Hebrew Armageddon." The first question here is whether Armageddon is meant to be symbolic or literal. That relates to the competing ways of interpreting the mysterious Book of Revelation.

To oversimplify, the "past" school thinks Revelation addresses persecution of Christians in the late first century, when the book was written. The "present" school thinks it depicts believers' struggles through history. Both regard the book as poetic and symbolic.

The "future" school is popularized in America by many Evangelical Protestants, including writers of pulp fiction in the "Left Behind" genre, and sects like Jehovah's Witnesses. They deem Revelation a depiction of End-Times events, including a literal climactic battle.

Whether literal or symbolic, what is Armageddon?

Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza of Harvard University considers it a merely "mythological place" whose name "eludes all scholarly attempts of definition."

However, most scholars think the definition is obvious, reports Eric H. Cline of the University of Cincinnati, who examines the famous location in an article in the current issue of Bible Review magazine and the forthcoming book "The Battles of Armageddon" (University of Michigan Press).

The Hebrew "Har Megiddon" means "Mount of Megiddo." And most conclude that Revelation refers, either literally or symbolically, to that ancient town in Israel's Jezreel Valley. However, there's a minority view that the "H" was a breathing mark that got added to the original Hebrew "Ir Megiddo," meaning "City of Megiddo."

Another theory ties Armageddon to the Hebrew "Har Mo'ed" or "Mount of Assembly," meaning Jerusalem's Mount Zion. (After all, Revelation locates history's final battle, long after Armageddon, at Jerusalem.) But some scholars, including Jon Paulien of Michigan's Andrews University, think there's too big a linguistic leap from Har Mo'ed to Armageddon. Some Evangelicals object that since there's no literal mountain at Megiddo, the Bible must be referring to a nearby peak, perhaps Mount Carmel.

But Cline, an archaeologist with the Megiddo excavations, insists there is indeed a mount at this site — not some giant peak, to be sure, but a 70-foot mound created by the building of successive cities on top of each

other in ancient times.

Cline also argues that Megiddo is an appropriate setting since more than 30 conflicts have occurred at the crossroads town or nearby during the past 4,000 years. The warfare has involved Egyptians, Israelites, Greeks, Muslims, European Crusaders and Mongols, and modern-day Germans, British, Israelis and Arabs.

Commanders in these bloody conflicts included the biblical Deborah, Gideon, Saul, Jonathan and Jezebel; Egypt's Pharaoh Thutmose III; Ptolemy; Saladin; Napoleon; and World War I's General Allenby.

Cline also finds Megiddo fitting due to a biblical link that has been noted for centuries and rates a footnote in the Catholic edition of the Revised Standard Version.

King Josiah, the "second David," ascended the throne of Judah in 639 B.C. and ordered sweeping reforms

to wipe out paganism and purify worship of the one true God. But it turned out that Josiah was the last truly independent ruler in the family line of David. He died at Megiddo in a battle against Egypt in 609 B.C. (2 Kings 23:29-30, 2 Chronicles 35:20-27) and Judah became a mere puppet of Egypt under Josiah's sons.

The later Old Testament prophet Zechariah (in chapter 12) referred to Megiddo when he foretold the restoration of the Davidic monarchy. And the Gospel of Matthew (in chapter 1) traced Jesus Christ's ancestry through Josiah back to David.

The meaning, says Cline, is that the Messiah will restore the line of David at Megiddo, the very town where it disappeared.

So the battle of Megiddo in 609 B.C. ended an epoch, while the future battle of Megiddo will "initiate a new era and re-establish the kingdom of God."

## Obituary

In Loving Memory of  
Baby Ruth Armstrong

Baby Ruth was born in Wichita Falls, Texas in 1924. She moved to Portland in the late 1940's. She married Theodios Armstrong in June of 1965. She

survived by her husband Theodios R. Armstrong a son Claud Edward Davis and daughters, Althea L. Davis, Bobbie Agbonze and Doris R. Armstrong all of Portland. She is lay to rest at Willamette National Cemetary.

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## Local church hosts session of the Oregon/Washington annual conference

CONTRIBUTED STORY  
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Approximately 150 church leaders and appointed delegates from Oregon and Washington will convene June 21-25 in Vancouver, WA. Community African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church will host this year's annual gathering.

The conference is being held this year at "The Worship, The Work and The Witness" Romans 8:1-5. The conference meets annually to receive reports, appoint

conference officers and pastors and review other items of interest.

An important topic at the conference will be a discussion centering on the proposed merger of AME Zion denomination with the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) denomination.

Another issue before the conference is the declaration of Harriet Tubman's home (located in Auburn, NY) as a national historic site.

Scheduled to attend the 108th Opening Session on Wednesday, June 21 is: Royce Pollard, Mayor, Vancouver, Washington

Vernon Stoner, Vancouver City Manager

Val Joshua, NAACP President, Vancouver

Mayor Pollard is expected to proclaim June 21-25 as African Methodist Episcopal Zion Week. The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was established in 1796 because blacks were unable to worship and grow in leadership under then Methodist denomination. As a result, blacks separated and formed their own denomination.

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