

Mount St. Helens

On this day in 1980, Mount St. Helens erupted when an earthquake triggered a massive landslide that took off the top of the mountain. Picturesque Mount St. Helens in southwestern Washington had been dormant for more than 100 years before a bulge in its north face indicated renewed activity in early 1980.

The landslide uncorked the column of magma that had been building up, and pressurized gases within the volcano were released in a tremendous explosion. Within a few minutes, a vast, gray landscape replaced the forested slopes, and the mountain's elevation decreased from 9,677 feet to 8,365 feet. The landslide killed countless animals, and reports list 60 people dead or missing. Winds carried volcanic ash across 57,000 square kilometers of the western United States, causing travel disruptions, economic loss and other problems.

The Old Testament frequently uses volcano-related images to describe God's anger against sin and those who rebel against His authority. In anger, God explodes and bursts out in fury, surrounded by thick, rising smoke. The Lord's righteous anger shakes the heavens and moves the earth (Amos 1:2). This picture warns us against God's anger, and also demonstrates what a powerful force anger is.

Trusting Jesus saves us from God's anger, but not from our own. Sometimes, our anger might be legitimately directed at sin, but we are warned against letting anger control us (Ephesians 4:26). This happens when we react in the heat of the moment, or when we let the pressure of anger quietly build until we suddenly explode and devastate those around us.

The only way to prevent an eruption is to not let a day end with unresolved anger in us, whether active or dormant.

Don't sin by letting anger control you. Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil. Ephesians 4:26-27

--Beecher Hunter