

Smoky Mountain Bible Institute

Geology III Volcanoes & Canyons

So, let's have a look at Volcanoes and Canyons. The reason I am covering these two together is because of a unique case study that argues clearly for a young earth, and what connects these topics is one major geological event. Many people use Volcanoes and Canyons when arguing for an old earth, but they must ignore the evidence I share with you now to make such claims.

At 8:32 and 17 seconds A.M. Pacific Standard Time on May 18, 1980, Mt. St. Helens, at an elevation of 9677 feet, blasted off one-half cubic mile of material after a 5.1 RS earthquake shook its foundations. This was no surprise to geologists because the mountain had been growing at a rate of 50 feet a day. Some 57 people lost their lives that day because they refused to heed the warnings of a geologist. After a 20-million-ton explosive blast blew off the side of the mountain, it was followed by a 550-degree, 200 mile per hour pyroclastic flow of hot steam and ash that decimated everything in its path for miles. The mountain then spent nine hours in a state of constant eruption, spewing off another 400 million tons of explosive power. This is equal to 30 thousand Hiroshima-sized nuclear blasts at the rate of about one per second over that nine-hour period.

This event carries a lot of evidence for catastrophism which I mentioned in the Geology 101 Introduction. It gives us a lot of great evidence for a young earth, and a worldwide flood and its aftermath. This event gave geologists a whole new perspective on the deposition of sedimentary layers, and the formation of canyons, not to mention some amazing insight into the formation of polistrata fossils and coal beds. First, some quickly eroded canyons cut to a depth of some 75 feet in a very short time exposed a 25-foot layer mud flow laid down by the initial eruption. On top of that was another 25-foot layer from a pyroclastic flow of a later eruption on June 12th, 1980. Then there was a 25-foot top layer from a March of 1982 eruption. Some of these 25-foot layers had multiple layers within them giving an appearance that it was laid down over great periods of time if using standard geological methods of dating sedimentation. However, these many layers are known to be from just a few events over a few years, each laid down over the course of hours or days.

The formation of canyons such as Step Canyon and Loowit Canyon, not to mention as many as five other smaller canyons, that were formed in a mudslide in 1982 which released the west fork of the Toutle River from its source Spirit Lake, show just how rapidly a canyon can be formed. Some of these canyons were cut in days. Some cut through volcanic rock formations that were hundreds and even thousands of years old, giving us canyons that are 1/40th the size of the Grand Canyon. This begs the question.... Did the Colorado river cut the Grand Canyon over millions of years, or was it the rapid draining of a massive inland lake that cut the canyon in a relatively short time? The difference in elevation of the north and south rims of the Grand Canyon, especially in the section that flows north, would argue for a rapid cut, not a long slow cut which is the currently-held popular view.

And finally, this amazing event gives us some clues on how coal beds and polistrata fossils were formed. We find fossil trees in many locations that pass through many geologic layers representing a supposed millions of years. How is it that this tree waited millions of years to be covered without decaying? The Flood offers a much better explanation, and Spirit Lake gives us a micro-example of how that happened. Hundreds of thousands of trees were blown into Spirit Lake during the 1980 eruption, covering half of its 4 square mile surface with logs. The first insight is that the logs rubbed all the bark off of each other leaving a 3 foot thick layer of bark peat at the bottom of the lake, and many coal seams are clearly layers of coalified bark peat. Second insight is that many of the logs, being denser at the root base, started to float upright until they slowly drifted to the bottom. Later layers of sediment caused them to be held, and eventually covered, in that upright position within multiple layers.....a clear explanation for polistrata fossils. So maybe the supposed 27 layers of successive forests on specimen ridge in Yellowstone National Park are not successive forests, but a collection of logs that floated down at different rates, and were covered at different levels after a world-wide flood. A comparison of tree rings at different levels on that ridge show similar weather patterns, giving evidence of the same forest, not many separated by millions of years. Well, I think that takes care of volcanoes and canyons. See you next time.