**INCENTIVES 2nd Peter Ch. 3**

On May 19th of this year Reporters heard Darryl Clinton say, "You might want to step back," as another ‘explosion’ boomed nearby. He knew exactly what ‘that sound’ meant.

A fissure had violently cracked open the ‘earth of Hawaii’s surface’ & was spewing forth more ‘lava’; and, quite likely, more lava ‘bombs’ -- flying ‘chunks’ of molten rock.

Clinton spoke to Reporters, while ‘defending’ his two homes in Pahoa roughly 100 yards from the unstable fissure that had been ‘erupting’ for more than a week.

To get from one house to another was to ‘play’ a real life-or-death game of “frogger”. The yards were littered every few feet with fallen lava, but Clinton wasn't worried about ‘himself’ getting hit by these flying hunks of molten rock.

"It's almost like catching a football," Clinton said in describing how to avoid being hit. "But you don't want to catch this football." He disbelieved that he would be ‘hit’.

At that moment, a lava bomb landed next to a house guarded by Darryl Clinton. Armed with just a fire extinguisher and a garden hose, Clinton jumped to ‘defend’ the homes.

He sprayed down the burning ‘lava bombs’ to prevent the houses from catching fire. Then, one hit a septic tank -- setting it ablaze with a blue flame of burning methane gas.

One day later, Clinton fell victim himself. He was talking on his ‘cell phone’ when a bowling ball-sized ‘lava bomb’ hit him in the leg while he was sitting on the porch.

"'That didn't just happen' was my first thought," he said Tuesday. "I knew it was real because of the pain." The fiery bomb snapped bones in his leg. "Then I got caught on fire, fell on the floor, grabbed my foot and leg and held 'em together," he said.

Another neighbour, Dona Mueller, took a different approach. She packed-up and **left** her ‘home’ as soon as the Deafening ‘fissure explosions’ began shaking her house.
-And…Mueller's not taking much with her. She said, "It's just stuff. I can walk away."

Yet, in spite of his injuries, Darryl said he has ‘no regrets’ about putting himself **in** harm's way. Up until the point he was hit, the risk of injury seemed low enough to warrant trying to save ‘the homes’, he said. Of course, though, if Clinton could do it again he would ‘pay more attention’ and try not to get hit. // Some people just won’t ‘learn’!

He said, "For the most part, we've enjoyed the whole time -- front row seats to every aspect of a lava flow you can imagine, -it's just been amazing to ‘see it’ close like that."

His advice to others: “If you’re leery of going surfing in certain conditions, or anything else, don’t tempt fate. Just be safe. **But**, if you feel comfortable and you’re aware and you’re capable, by all means. It’s fun. Thrill of a lifetime.” //Okay…Thanks for that Darryl

Of course, History records the tragic tales of many who **were** warned of calamity, and instead of ‘**heeding**’ the warning, took their chances. And many have paid a great price.

When JESUS ascended -He left us with a promise that one day He would **return**.
Many people proclaim that they believe that He **is** coming. But…when you look at their lives there is ‘little evidence’ that they really anticipate His **arrival**.

JESUS said that this would be the case - **Matthew** **24:37-39**, “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.”

As Noah prepared the Ark and preached of the impending **judgment** of mankind’s sin,
the ‘people’ continued to live their ‘lives’ with no **fear** of what was ‘on the horizon’.
-Not only did they continue ‘going about’ their lives, they scoffed at Noah's warning.
And, they ‘suffered the devastating consequences’ for their unbelief. TODAY…there

**is** no doubt that JESUS said he **is** coming again! In **Luke 12:40** He warns us, “You must be ready, because the Son of Man **will** come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

In our text this morning, **2nd Peter Ch. 3**, Peter tells of ‘those’ who **ridiculed** the idea of a **literal** RETURN of JESUS. Man's **denial** will not change the fact that Jesus **is** coming back

The OT prophets said that the Messiah would **come** the first time, some didn't believe it, BUT HE **DID**! Jesus said He would rise from the grave on the 3rd day, some didn't believe it, BUT HE **DID**! – & Jesus said that He will **return**...many don't believe it, BUT HE **WILL**!!

After defining the characteristics of **genuine** believers in CH. 1 and the characteristics of **false teachers** in the **2nd** chapter, Peter turns his eyes upward and **forward** to this time when CHRIST would come **again**. He points us **to** GOD -for God is the only One who is always to be **trusted**. And, Peter asks us to trust the **revelation** of God, His Holy **Word**.

So…, we are encouraged to be unshakable in our **acceptance** of Scripture -for **it**, and its Message will ‘come under’ severe attack; -because of our society’s ‘moral’ climate, its leaders will question the Bible and do their worst to cause believers to question it too!

The **2nd** Coming of Jesus Christ ‘calls for’ and justifies a **godly** lifestyle for **every** person; therefore **it** will be particularly belittled. **Believing** in the **Second** Coming of Christ is basically a matter of **faith** in GOD –and- of **accepting** Scriptures **as** His **revelation**.

There are **two** main points that we will draw from this passage **1st)** JESUS **Is** Coming. **&** **2nd)** **Judgment** Is Coming with Him. These are 2 indisputable **facts** that will impact every person on the face of the earth. Let's begin by examining the irrefutable reality that:

I. **Jesus Is Coming** - This **is** a fact that should bring great **hope** and **excitement** for those of ‘us’ who **are** a part of the "bride of Christ" –the church- the family of GOD. But, this same fact should also bring great **fear** for ‘those’ who are not prepared to meet Him.

Peter's Letter was written **to** born again believers. His intention was to remind them
–us– that -CHRIST will indeed **return**. As your pastor, that is also my desire today!

As Christians, **we** must Remember: The Promise of Christ's Return – **CH 3 v 1**,
“Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome ‘thinking’.

Peter states that his intention with this 2nd letter is to "stir up their minds".
"Stir up" literally means to "fan the flames". It has the idea of rekindling a fire.
-& the only reason to **re**kindle a ‘fire’ is that it has begun to ‘die-down’ –to burn out.

Maybe these Christians had forgotten what they had been taught about Christ's Return. Perhaps, some of them had been influenced by the Scoffers & False Teachers of that day. We don’t know, but, Peter felt compelled to remind them that their Saviour **was** coming!

It is important that this fact is at the ‘forefront’ of our ‘minds’ too. Especially considering that we are ‘living’ almost 2,000 years ‘later’ than the original recipients of this letter.

‘Out of sight –out of mind’ **is** a truism. But, if you **have** forgotten that JESUS **is** coming again, it is a safe assumption that you have not been **in** your Bible ‘looking’ for HIM!

1) We Are Reminded of The Second Coming **In** The Scriptures - The O.T. contains hundreds of prophecies that were ‘fulfilled’ during the **first** Coming of the Messiah.
But, the O. T. also contains ‘numerous references’ to the **Second** Coming as well.

Likewise, In the **27** books of the New Testament there are over **380** references to the **Second** Coming. 1 out of every 25 verses in the New Testament refers **to** the **2nd** Coming of the Saviour. For every prophecy on the 1st coming of Christ, there are **8** on Christ's **2nd**

Throughout The Bible, GOD has used many different prophets to **warn** people about the details of this "The Day of The Lord" -as His Coming is referred to. Notice that Peter says:

2) We are Reminded of The Second Coming **By** The **Prophets** – v **2** part **a**
“I want you to recall the words spoken in the past **by** the holy prophets…”.

Remember, Peter has been exposing **false** prophets. Here, he calls his readers to only trust those true "holy prophets of old" whose prophecies concerned the Day of the Lord.

**Psalms 50:3-4**, “Our God comes and will not be silent; a fire devours before him, and around him a tempest rages. He summons the heavens above, and the earth, that he may judge his people. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people.

**Malachi 4:1**, “Surely the day **is** coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant, and every evildoer, will be stubble; and the day that is coming will set them on fire,” says the Lord Almighty. Not a root or a branch will be left to them.” -This hasn’t happened yet…

So, not only did the O. T. prophets speak of the first coming of Christ, they **warned** of His **return** as well. Likewise, when you look at the New Testament you will see that:

3) We Are Reminded of The Second Coming **By** The **Apostles** – v **2** part **b** (recall to mind) “the command given by our Lord and Saviour through your **apostles**.”

Peter references the message of Christ's **Apostles**. These were the men who were chosen, called and commissioned **by** JESUS to be His ambassadors **to** the World.

They were moved by the Holy Spirit of God. These are the men that God used to pen the N.T. In its **260** chapters there are approximately **300** references **to** CHRIST'S **2nd** Coming

\* **John** says in **Rev. 1:7**, "Look, he is coming with the clouds”, & “every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him”; and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of him.”[

\* In **James** **5:7**we read, "Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord’s coming.”

\* **Paul** says in **1 Thess. 5:2**, "the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.”

\* & **Peter** adds to that in our text – Ch. 3 v **10**, “the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire,
and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.”

It is very clear that the Apostles **believed in** the **Return** of CHRIST. & not ‘knowing’ the time of His Coming, they believed they might very well ‘see it’ **in** their day. Again, I say, **we** are closer to His **return** than they were ‘by’ nearly 2000 years! Are we **expectant**?

Why not? **We** are reminded of the 2nd Coming **by** the Prophets **&** by the Apostles …**&**…

4) We are Reminded of The **2nd** Coming **By** The Saviour – himself. Much of what we know about the Second Coming, we learn directly from JESUS. Consider what **He** said in:

- Matthew **25:13**, “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

 - Matthew **4:17**, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

- Matthew **26:64**, “…you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the
Mighty One **and** coming on the clouds of heaven.”

How do we **know** JESUS **is** coming back? HE TOLD US HE WAS!!! -Another of the great evidences of the Second Coming **is** the events that are taking place **in** the world today.

 - Karl Barth once said that
"one should read with The Bible in one hand, and the Newspaper in the other."

JESUS described the things that would take place **in** the End Times - Matthew **24:4-8**, “Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.

Today’s **news** is full of false religions, warfare, and natural disasters –always has been. But, things were going to get much worse as the Great Tribulation approaches. & when we look at current events it seems that the stage **is** set for JESUS to come in the clouds!

Consider also what Paul said in **II Timothy 3:1-5**, "mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.”

If those verses do not describe ‘**our** society’ **in** 2018, I don't know what does!
& whether you believe it or not...CHRIST Will **Return**!! - Even with all of this Evidence **supporting** the return of JESUS, there remain many who ‘scoff’ at the idea. Notice:

B. **Skeptics** will **Ridicule:** The Promise Of Christ's Return – **2nd Peter Ch. 3 v 3-4,** ”Above all, you must understand that in the last days **scoffers** will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where **is** this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything ‘goes on as it has’ since the beginning of Creation.”

Peter says that these "Scoffers" **deny** the reality of Christ’s Coming. They state that nothing has changed...and that things continue as they have since the beginning.

The false Teachers that Peter has been ‘exposing’ were among those skeptics who ridiculed the teaching of Christ's **return**. These Scoffers have hardened ‘their hearts’ against God. They do not believe in ‘anything’ they cannot see with their physical eyes. -& not only do they not believe ‘the prophecy’, they mock and ridicule ‘those’ who **do**!

UC…not only the Apostles, but the majority of those in the early church **expected** Christ to come **in** their day. But, by this time, many of the 1st believers had died -and CHRIST had not yet returned. -The Scoffers asked - "Where **is** the promise of his coming”?

We hear the same argument from the skeptics in our day. They will say, “People have been looking for Jesus to come back for 2000 years and He hasn't arrived yet! Did you ever consider that he’s not coming?” They laugh, mock, scorn and blaspheme...

I don't know about you, but I **am** excited about the fact that JESUS **is** coming again!
Each and every born again believer should anticipate His arrival.

Based on the Evidence of Scripture & the Events in our World -to the Scoffers I can say, "Yes, He has **yet** to return, but we **are** closer today that we were yesterday!
-And, the Fact that CHRIST **is** Coming should be having an EFFECT **on** ALL of our LIVES.

Paul says in **Titus 2:11-14**, “For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to **do** what is good.”

Christ's **return** is a ‘glorious thought’ for those who **belong** to Him.
But…on that day the skeptics and scoffers **will** ‘realize’ that they were **wrong**.

& when they come to this realization it may be **too late**! This leads us **to** the second Fact I would like to consider: Not only do we see that Jesus **Is** Coming, it is also apparent that:

II. **Judgment** Is Coming with HIM. -
But… those who deny Christ's **return** also reject the ‘idea’ of GOD’s Judgment.

There is no doubt that GOD **is** longsuffering and merciful. In v. **9**, Peter says “The Lord…. is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

But, God is also Holy, just & righteous. He never has, & never will, let sin go **un**punished. & there **is** coming a day when His ‘judgment & wrath’ **will** be unleashed.

Let's take just a few a moments to prove that this **will** happen because it HAS happened.

A. The **Past** Judgment Of God – v **5**, “But they deliberately forget that long ago **by** God’s **word** the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time **was** deluged and destroyed.
-By the same **word** the ‘present’ heavens and earth **are** reserved for **fire**, being kept for the day of **judgment** and destruction of the ungodly.”

Peter reminds his readers that GOD has already ‘judged’ the world once before.
This historical judgment resulted in the Great FLOOD, & is recorded in – **Gen. 6:5-7.**

The **fact** that GOD has done it once –should- make men realize that He can and will do it again. But…Peter says these ‘Scoffers’ are "willfully **ignorant**" of this fact. They deny it.

They invent fables, they tell lies, they deceive others -and they do this because they **reject** the truth! The problem isn’t that they can't understand the Truth, THEY DON'T WANT to KNOW this TRUTH! They want to live life their way with no fear **of** judgment.

V. **3** said that they “walk after their own **lusts**.” – you see, **if** the Scoffers admitted to
**the existence** of GOD and acknowledged ‘what’ His Word says **is** TRUTH –then- they must humble themselves before Him, repent of their ‘sins’ and surrender to Him.

However, instead of acknowledging the **truth** -they deny **Christ**, they reject His **return,** and they ignore God's **past** judgment on the world. They deny The FLOOD occurred.

&, not only do they ignore God's **past** ‘judgment’, they reject His **coming** ‘judgment’.

But, hear the **warning** of **Hebrews** **9:27** ...
“people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,…” Again, in **V.** **7**: of **2nd Peter 3** we find… The Promised **Judgment** Of God – “the present heavens and earth **are** reserved **for** fire, being kept **for** the day of **judgment** and destruction of the ungodly.

The first time this world was judged & destroyed **by** Water. GOD put the rainbow in the sky to signify that He would never again destroy the World **by** **water** (Gen. 9:13).

The next time it will be judged **by** fire! – again…V. **10,** “the day of the Lord **will** come like a thief. The heavens **will** disappear with a roar; the elements **will** be destroyed **by** fire,
and the earth and everything done in it **will be** laid bare.”

There **are** Scoffers in our day as there were in Peter's day. They deny that JESUS **Is** Coming. They deny that **Judgment** Is Coming, but…one day they **will** see these ‘things’ come to pass, but on that Day -it will be too late. The Day of SALVATION is NOW!

My friends, I hope that you now accept the fact that whether PEOPLE "Believe It Or Not...Christ **Will** Return!! Jesus **is** coming and He **is** bringing Judgment with Him!

The warning **has** been sounded. The evidence **is** all around us. Will you ‘help’ others surrender to Him while there **is** time, or will you wait until it is too late for them!

This assumes that you ARE ready ‘yourself’. If not, that can change right here, right now!

Our faithful Lord **has** given us His Word and He **is** establishing us **by** the Holy Spirit so that **we** might be become **righteous**, and join Him -as He patiently works to bring men and women, boy and girls **to** faith in Him.

For ‘those of us’ who **have** been **redeemed** by **the blood** of Jesus Christ, the only reasonable **response** is a life **lived** for His **glory.** Am just reminding **you** of this, as Peter has done in His Letter, which Ends as it Began…**Verses 17 & 18**,
“Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
To him be glory both now and forever!” **Amen**.