

THE FUTURE OUTLOOK

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N. C. HEART NEWS BUREAU

A young man sat in the waiting room of his doctor's office one afternoon. Suddenly he moaned and toppled off the chair.

His heart had stopped. Technically, he was dead.

The doctor rushed out, took one look at his patient—who had been waiting for a routine physical check-up—and with the help of his nurse, rolled him on his back, undid his collar, tilted his head back and started to work.

As the nurse breathed through the patient's mouth, forcing air in and out of his lungs, ten to twelve times a minute, the doctor put his hands at the base of the breastbone and began to pump rhythmically, sixty times a minute.

While the stunned people in the waiting room watched, the team continued to pump oxygenated blood through the man's body to keep up the artificial circulation until his heart could take over.

Eventually, his heart did begin to beat again, as it often does in such cases, and the young man recovered—literally brought back from the dead by the quick action of the doctor and his nurse.

The doctor later discovered through tests given at the hospital that a mild heart attack caused this "sudden death." There are other possible causes of sudden stoppage of the heart, according to the North Carolina Heart Association. It is something that occasionally happens during an operation or in drowning, electrical shock, suffocation, blood loss and severe drug reactions.

The victim of "sudden death" can recover fully—provided trained help is available immediately.

Speed is essential. If circulation stops for as little as four minutes, the delicate tissues of the brain can suffer irreparable damage from a shortage of oxygen.

For many years the only practical place to revive a stopped heart was the operating room because the only successful way to keep blood circulating was to massage the heart by hand, and that involved opening the chest cavity.

In 1960 the picture changed. A team from Johns Hopkins Medical School devised and perfected the technique for closed-chest massage used later by the young man's doctor.

As closed-chest compression has gained wide acceptance, more and more people likely to be confronted with heart arrest are being trained when to use closed-chest massage and how to do it properly, and a statewide training program by the North Carolina Heart Association and its local heart groups is now underway. Simple as the technique is, even a physician needs special training to avoid damage to the heart, lungs, liver and ribs.

In some cases of "sudden death" the heart will not resume normal beating and becomes a mass of twitching, quivering fibers—its usually well-coordinated electrical system gone awry.

In such a case, the quivering heart is unable to pump and will not begin beating of its own accord.

Electronics have come to the rescue with devices known as defibrillators, a jolt of electricity is given to the heart to halt the quivering. Then the electrical system can begin to work as it should and the beat resumes.

Defibrillators have recently become standard emergency equipment in hospitals.

Advances in reversing "sudden deaths" have been so

THIS WEEK'S SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

THE DEATH THAT CHANGES LIVES

What is our Concern?

In Lesson 4 (December 26) we noted the present-day emphasis on the search for identity. We suggested there that we find much light for our self-knowledge as we think carefully about Jesus' own self-understanding. Let us carry this suggestion further as we consider the final issue of his life, the cross.

In our search for self-understanding we receive help from psychology, sociology, and other disciplines. Much has been learned about the dynamics of personality and behavior. Yet as our situation becomes more complex, the truth about ourselves seems more difficult. The problem arises partly from the fact that we are too close to ourselves to see ourselves objectively.

We are in something of the predicament noted by the ancient scientist, Archimedes. He declared that he could move the world if he had a place to stand outside the world. It seems that we too need an "Archimedean point" outside ourselves—yet this is the very point we cannot reach.

Through our study of the life of Jesus we have found some light. We recognize how far short we come from his matchless life. We cannot escape the conviction that there is a basic wrongness about us that is utterly defeating and even fatal. We fear we have not only done wrong; perhaps we are wrong.

If this is true, a most serious consequence follows. We cannot make ourselves right. Every effort to extricate ourselves from our predicament depends upon us—and we are the ones who are wrong.

The situation is like that of one who has fallen into quicksand. He may recognize and deplore the step that brought him into this plight. He may see clearly where he should be. But every move he makes to get out depends on the very situation that is dragging him down to destruction.

Not only does it seem nearly impossible to know ourselves

truly, but if our status is as deadly as we suspect, there is absolutely nothing we can do to save ourselves.

Does the gospel of Christ, especially the crisis of the cross, have a sure word for us in this tragic, double dilemma?

Searching the Scripture

The Scripture for this lesson is Luke 23. Selected verses are printed below.

Luke 23:39-53

39 One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us." 40 But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly; for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." 42 And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingly power." 43 And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

44 It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, 45 while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. 46 Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." And having said this he breathed his last. 47 Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, and said, "Certainly this man was innocent!" 48 And all the multitudes who assembled to see the sight, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. 49 And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance and saw these things.

50 Now there was a man named Joseph from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, 51 who had not consented to their purpose and deed, and he was looking for the kingdom of God. 52 This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 53 Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud, and laid him

in a rock-hewn tomb, where no one had ever yet been laid.

Memory Selection: By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. —1 John 3:16

What the Scripture says to us

A society that was blind to God crucified the Savior exactly as it executed the two criminals. The one seemed as dangerous to the well-being of society as did the others.

Luke tells us that even the natural order was disturbed by this event. From the sixth hour until the ninth hour (from noon until three o'clock) the land was dark. This darkness is to be understood as a miraculous symbol of evil, for an eclipse is impossible at Passover.

Matthew 27:51 speaks also of an earthquake, which may explain the tearing of "the curtain of the temple," the veil closing the entrance to the holy of holies. (Compare Hebrews 10:19-20.)

The people who were associated with the crucifixion of Christ could never be the same again. None could be neutral, for each found himself confronting himself in a way that demanded a choice.

The Jewish leaders had no lack of evidence that Jesus revealed the God they claimed to serve. Yet their jealousy and fear drove them to an increasing intensity of hatred. (Luke 23:2-5, 10, 18-23)

Pilate, presented in the best possible light by Luke, tried to acquit Jesus. But his weakness and political expediency forced him to condemn a man he himself declared innocent. (Luke 23: 1-7, 12-25)

Was Herod serious in his desire to see Jesus or only curious? In any case, his trifling and contempt brought him down on the side of Jesus' enemies.

When Pilate put the choice up to the people, they preferred a murderer rather than the "Author of life." (Luke 23:13-25; Acts 3:14-15) In the end they gave way to futile remorse and hopelessness. (Luke 23:48)

The two criminals crucified with Jesus vividly portray the sharp contrast in the outcome of their crisis. One died as he had lived, raging and blaspheming, seeking only his present benefit. The other recognized and honored Christ, confessing his guilt and praying for forgiveness; he died in the blessed assurance of a changed destiny. (Luke 23: 32-33, 39-43)

Joseph of Arimathea seems to have moved from a secret regard for Jesus to open, decisive discipleship. (Luke 23:50-53; John 19:38) In the council or Sanhedrin, the ruling body of the Jews, he had refused to vote for Jesus' condemnation. He was

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dramatic in the past few years that some physicians are dreaming of even bigger and better rescue techniques.

One such dream is that circulation can be maintained mechanically after "death" for hours, or even days, while physicians attempt to correct the cause of death.

Several machines to handle artificial pumping have already been designed and the biggest stumbling blocks to this particular dream are the medical techniques needed actually to reverse a fatal illness.

But visionary as such dreams may seem, one can never tell what the future may hold.

Certainly at the turn of the century, the hopes of reviving stopped hearts must have fallen into the same dream category, and we can all take heart that physicians have these dreams—and the perseverance and dedication to try to make them come true.