

## Scripture Reading: Acts 9:1-6, (7-20)

*As a well spent day brings happy sleep, so life well used  
brings happy death. —Leonardo da Vinci*

When most people recall Jonathan Swift's novel, *Gulliver's Travels*, they think of the land of Lilliput with its diminutive inhabitants. Yet, Lilliput is not the only strange land the peripatetic Gulliver visits. One of the most chilling scenes is his visit to the land of Laputa.

There he encounters a tragic tribe of humanity known as the *struldbrugs*. "Struldbrug" is the name given by the Laputans to certain of their own people who are born with an unhappy curse: *they will live forever*.

Whenever a baby is born in Laputa, the first thing the mother looks for — even before she counts the fingers and toes — is a distinctive dark birthmark on the infant's head. If she sees no such birthmark, she rejoices. If the birthmark is present, then the mother and her kin begin mourning immediately, for this child will never die.

The difficulty is that, while struldbrugs never die, they still continue to age. Struldbrugs live a more-or-less normal life until they surpass 100 years or so, after which they experience dementia and all manner of physical infirmities. Eventually, they become little more than hollow husks of human beings — aimlessly wandering the countryside, howling in pain from arthritic joints that no longer work, minds emptied of all memory and personality.

The Bible teaches us that there is a wonderful alternative to the experience of the fictional struldbrugs. No one wants to live forever with aches and pains, weakness of mind and body. That's what death is: a release from these sorrows. But death is not the end of life! It is rather a portal that sends us to our new heavenly home, where, according to Revelation 21:4, God "will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more."

Now we can understand why the apostle Paul says in his letter to the Philippian church: "For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. ... I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you (1:21, 23-24).

Yes, to "be with Christ" is "far better"!

—Timothy Merrill with Carlos Wilton

*Prayer: Lord, thank you for the promise of an eternal home. But until then, may I be your faithful servant. In your name. Amen.*

## Daily Bible Readings

**Sunday:** Luke 14-17  
**Monday:** 1 Samuel 4-7  
**Tuesday:** 1 Samuel 8-10  
**Wednesday:** 1 Samuel 11-13  
**Thursday:** 1 Samuel 14-16  
**Friday:** 1 Samuel 17-20  
**Saturday:** Psalms 43-45

*Verse to Remember*  
*Why are you cast down,  
 O my soul ... Hope in God.*  
 —Psalm 43:5

May 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

<b>BIRTH DATES ... OR NOT?</b>					
<b>DIRECTIONS:</b> Is the year following each person's name the year he or she was born, or the year he or she died? Write a B for "born" or a D for "died."					
<i>Answers to the right.</i>					
PERSON	YEAR	B or D?	PERSON	YEAR	B or D?
William Shakespeare	1616		Mahatma Gandhi	1869	
Martin Luther	1483		Beethoven	1827	
Napoleon	1769		Joan of Arc	1431	
Henry Ford	1863		Aristotle	322 BC	
Julius Caesar	44 BC		Elizabeth I	1533	
Cleopatra	30 BC		Charles Darwin	1882	
Christopher Columbus	1451		Saint Francis	1181	
Marco Polo	1324		Constantine the Great	337	
Saint Augustine	354		Johann S. Bach	1685	
Michelangelo	1564		Rembrandt	1606	
Galileo	1564		John Milton	1674	
Charlemagne	814		Harriet Tubman	1913	
Abraham Lincoln	1809		Babe Ruth	1895	
Daniel Webster	1852		Jane Austen	1775	
Thomas Edison	1931		Edgar Allan Poe	1849	
Cicero	43 BC		King Henry VIII	1491	
Calamity Jane	1903		Indira Gandhi	1917	

**Answers (in alphabetical order by first or only word [name]):**

- Abraham Lincoln-B
- Aristotle-D
- Babe Ruth-B
- Beethoven-D
- Calamity Jane-D
- Charlemagne-D
- Charles Darwin-D
- Christopher Columbus-B
- Cicero-D
- Cleopatra-D
- Constantine the Great-D
- Daniel Webster-D
- Edgar Allan Poe-D
- Elizabeth I-B
- Galileo-B
- Harriet Tubman-D
- Henry Ford-B
- Indira Gandhi-B
- Jane Austen-B
- Joan of Arc-D
- Johann S. Bach-B
- John Milton-D
- Julius Caesar-D
- King Henry VIII-B
- Mahatma Gandhi-B
- Marco Polo-D
- Martin Luther-B
- Michelangelo-D
- Napoleon-B
- Rembrandt-B
- Saint Augustine-B
- Saint Francis-B
- Thomas Edison-D
- William Shakespeare-D



*MAY the Lord bless you, and MAY he keep you; MAY the Lord make his face shine upon you and MAY he be gracious to you; MAY the Lord turn his face toward you and MAY he give you peace.* —Adapted from the Aaronic Blessing of Numbers 6:24-26