

Rutgers - Eagleton Poll

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MAJORITY BELIEVE RESURRECTION STORY IS LITERAL ACCOUNT

*More than one-third of New Jersey adults also view parting of Red Sea as true word for word
New Jerseyans may take Bible less literally than the rest of U.S., but they attend church as often*

Fifty-six percent of New Jersey adults say that the biblical account of the resurrection of Jesus is literally true, in that it is a “word for word” re-telling of the event, according to the latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll.

Thirty-eight percent of those polled said the same of the account of Moses parting the Red Sea so the Jews could escape from Egypt.

The telephone survey of 800 adults, conducted March 26-30, has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3.5 percent. The poll asked the following two questions in random order:

I'm going to ask about a couple stories in the Bible...

The [first/second] is about Moses parting the Red Sea so the Jews could escape from Egypt.... Do you think that's literally true, meaning it happened that way word for word, or do you think it's meant as a lesson, not to be taken literally?

The [second/first] is the resurrection where Jesus physically rose from the dead... Do you

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think that's literally true, meaning it actually happened that way word for word, or do you think it's meant as a lesson, not to be taken literally?

“The higher percentage of adults believing in a literal account of the resurrection of Jesus compared to the parting of the Red Sea may stem from the core role of the resurrection in Christianity,” said Murray Edelman, Distinguished Visiting Scholar and Consultant of the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll.

Compared to national data, adults in New Jersey are less likely to believe that the Red Sea account is literally accurate. Sixty-four percent of adults told an ABC News Poll in 2004 that they believe the story to be literally correct, compared to 38 percent in New Jersey in March 2006.

While comparable national data is not available for the question concerning the resurrection of Jesus, Edelman said the initial evidence from the Red Sea question suggests “that, for New Jerseyans, the Bible may be more of a lesson than a literal account of what actually happened compared to their national counterparts. We would need more comparable questions, especially around the resurrection, to be sure.”

In New Jersey, Protestants were more likely than Catholics to believe in a literal account of the parting of the Red Sea (54 percent to 38 percent), and in the word-for-word description of Jesus’ resurrection (70 percent to 64 percent). Although there were not enough Jewish respondents to present reliable numbers, it was clear that they thought both stories were not literal accounts.

The poll also found that belief in the two Bible stories on a word-for-word basis increases as attendance at worship services increases, and is stronger among evangelical or born-again Christians, women, non-whites, the elderly, and those with a high school education or less.

For example, 53 percent of those who attend church, synagogue, or other worship services at least once a week believe in a literal account of the parting of the Red Sea. Seventy-seven percent of those attending worship services at least once a week believe that the account of the resurrection of Jesus is a literal re-telling of the story.

Evangelical or born-again Christians were more likely than others to believe the accounts to be literally true by a margin of 62 percent to 33 percent for the parting of the Red Sea, and 80 percent to 51 percent for the story of the resurrection of Jesus.

The poll found that attendance at worship services in the Garden State occurs on a par with attendance nationally. Thirty percent of New Jersey adults told the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll that they attend at least once a week, compared to 32 percent nationally in a Gallup/CNN/USA Today poll conducted in February.

But the percentage of adults identifying themselves as evangelical or born-again Christians is lower in New Jersey at 19 percent than it is nationally at 39 percent, according to an Associated Press/Ipsos-Public Affairs poll conducted in March.

New Jersey adults also are less likely to say religion is “extremely important” in their daily lives, 20 percent compared to 34 percent in a national survey conducted by RT Strategies/Cook Political Report in November 2005.

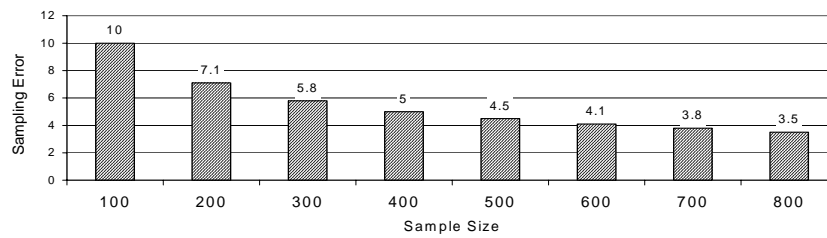
“Our poll says that New Jerseyans are as observant as the nation in attending worship services, but religion may have a different place in their lives compared to the rest of the nation,” Edelman said.

BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP 158-2)

The latest Eagleton-Rutgers Poll was conducted by telephone from March 26 to 30 with a scientifically selected random sample of 800 New Jersey adult (18+) residents.

All surveys are subject to sampling error, which is the expected probable difference between interviewing everyone in a population versus a scientific sampling drawn from that population. The sampling error for 800 New Jersey adult residents is +/- 3.5 %, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey residents were found to have a favorable opinion of an issue, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46.5% and 53.5% had all New Jersey residents been interviewed, rather than just a sample. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. The following chart shows the relationship between sample size and sampling error. Sampling error does not take into account other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording or context effects.

Sample Size and Sampling Error



R3. I'm going to ask about a couple stories in the Bible...The [first/second] is about Moses parting the Red Sea so the Jews could escape from Egypt.... Do you think that's literally true, meaning it happened that way word for word, or do you think it's meant as a lesson, not to be taken literally?
[Rotated with R3a]

| | Literally true | Not literally true | DK/RF | (n) |
|---|----------------|--------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Rutgers-Eagleton Poll / March 2006 (New Jersey Sample) | 38% | 49% | 13% | 800 |
| ABC News Poll / February 2004 (National Sample) | 64% | 28% | 8% ¹ | 1,011 |

R3a. The [second/first] is the resurrection where Jesus physically rose from the dead... Do you think that's literally true, meaning it actually happened that way word for word, or do you think it's meant as a lesson, not to be taken literally?

| | Literally true | Not literally true | DK/RF | (n) |
|---|----------------|--------------------|------------|------------|
| Rutgers-Eagleton Poll / March 2006 (New Jersey Sample) | 56% | 31% | 13% | 800 |

¹ Categorized as “No opinion”

R4. How often do you attend church, synagogue, or other worship services--at least once a week, almost every week, about once a month, seldom, or never?

| | At least once a week | Almost every week | About once a month | Seldom | Never | DK/RF | (n) |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|------------|
| Rutgers-Eagleton Poll / March 2006 (New Jersey Sample) | 30% | 10% | 14% | 28% | 15% | 3% | 800 |
| Eagleton Poll February 1995 ² (New Jersey Sample) | 29 % | 8 % | 17 % | 32 % | 14 % | 1 % | 801 |
| Gallup/CNN/USA Today, February 2006 ³ (National Sample) | 32 % | 10 % | 12 % | 27 % | 18 % | 2% | 1,000 |

R5. Would you describe yourself as a born again or evangelical Christian, or not?

| | Yes | No | DK/RF | (n) |
|---|------------|------------|--------------|------------|
| Rutgers-Eagleton Poll / March 2006 (New Jersey Sample) | 19% | 76% | 5% | 800 |
| Associated Press /Ipsos-Public Affairs Poll, March 2006 (National Sample) | 39% | 60% | 1% | 1,003 |

² Question asked was: "How often do you attend church or synagogue, at least once a week, almost every week, about once a month, seldom, or never?"

³ Question asked was: "How often do you attend church or synagogue, at least once a week, almost every week, about once a month, seldom, or never?"

R6. Do you consider yourself to be Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, some other religion, atheist or agnostic?

| | Catholic | Protestant | Jewish | Muslim | Some other religion | Atheist | Agnostic | DK/RF | (n) |
|---|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Rutgers-Eagleton Poll / March 2006 (New Jersey Sample) | 42% | 26% | 4% | 1% | 13% | 2% | 4% | 7% | 800 |

R7. How important is religion in your daily life?...Extremely important, very important, somewhat important, not too important, not important at all?

| | Extremely important | Very important | Somewhat important | Not too important | Not important at all | DK/RF | (n) |
|---|---------------------|----------------|--------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-----------|------------|
| Rutgers-Eagleton Poll / March 2006 (New Jersey Sample) | 20% | 32% | 27% | 10% | 9% | 2% | 800 |
| RT Strategies / Cook Political Report Poll, November 2005 (National Sample) | 34 % | 29 % | 22 % | 8 % | 6 % | 1 % | 1,000 |

Cross-tabulations of Red Sea question

R3. I'm going to ask about a couple stories in the Bible...The [first/second] is about Moses parting the Red Sea so the Jews could escape from Egypt.... Do you think that's literally true, meaning it happened that way word for word, or do you think it's meant as a lesson, not to be taken literally?
[Rotated with R3a]

| Rutgers-Eagleton Poll / March 2006 | Literally true | Not literally true | DK/RF | (n) |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------------|--------------|------------|
| <u>Church Attendance</u> | | | | |
| --At least once a week | 53% | 34% | 14% | 240 |
| --Almost every week | 60% | 30% | 10% | 88 |
| --About once a month | 34% | 56% | 10% | 106 |
| --Seldom | 28% | 61% | 12% | 218 |
| --Never | 24% | 66% | 10% | 121 |

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| <u>Born Again/Evangelical</u> | | | | |
| --Yes | 62% | 27% | 11% | 128 |
| --No | 33% | 56% | 10% | 625 |

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|------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------|-------|-----|
| Religious Affiliation | | | | |
| --Catholic | 38% | 52% | 10% | 328 |
| --Protestant | 54% | 35% | 11% | 205 |
| Gender | | | | |
| --Male | 32% | 56% | 12% | 384 |
| --Female | 44% | 42% | 14% | 416 |
| Race | | | | |
| --White | 35% | 54% | 11% | 615 |
| --Nonwhite | 48% | 35% | 16% | 151 |
| Age | | | | |
| --18-29 | 33% | 56% | 10% | 78 |
| --30-49 | 38% | 49% | 12% | 269 |
| --50-64 | 36% | 52% | 12% | 256 |
| --65+ | 48% | 35% | 18% | 172 |
| Education | | | | |
| --High school and below | 45% | 42% | 13% | 234 |
| --Some college and above | 33% | 54% | 13% | 556 |

Cross-tabulations of resurrection question

R3a. The [second/first] is the resurrection where Jesus physically rose from the dead... Do you think that's literally true, meaning it actually happened that way word for word, or do you think it's meant as a lesson, not to be taken literally?

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| <u>Gender</u> | | | | |
| --Male | 48% | 38% | 14% | 384 |
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