

## Many Believe in Miracles

By Kristin Cock 20.12.2018 07:00

One in five Norwegians believe that Jesus walked on water, a fresh survey shows.

Other biblical miracles also have our faith, according to a survey conducted by YouGov for the Nordic Bible Museum. 20 percent of participants report that they believe Jesus turned water into wine.

- The numbers are astounding. They also suggest that many are open to these stories actually having taken place, says executive director Rune Arnhoff at the Nordic Bible Museum.

According to the survey, 21 percent of participants report that they do believe Jesus walked on water, while 59 percent do not. 17 percent report that they do not know. 37 percent of participants report Christianity when questioned about which religion they identify with the most.

- Many Norwegians have grown up with stories from the Bible. Even though they don't interpret everything in a literal sense, many people believe that the texts have some sense of truth to them.

The well-known story from the Bible of Jesus walking on water to help the disciples who are struggling in a storm is one of several Bible stories where Jesus challenges the laws of nature.

Taboo to believe?

Professor in medieval history, Jon Vidar Sigurdsson at the University of Oslo, believes it is more challenging to identify as a Christian today than before.

- Within 30 to 40 years, the status of Christianity has been notably weakened in Norwegian societies, and it is perceived as a little old-fashioned to be a Christian. A lot of people might be keeping their faith to themselves, says Sigurdsson.

He believes that the survey is reflective of many Norwegians being more religious than they express on a daily basis.

- When as many as 21 percent reveal that they believe Jesus walked on water, and 20 percent believe Jesus turned water to wine, it does suggest that Norwegians believe that there is some truth behind the Bible narrative and in Christianity, he says.

Sigurdsson also thinks that talking about religion or expressing a personal belief in God might be considered taboo.

Real events?

- Both narratives are described by four different persons, Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John, in the four Gospels. They themselves, or people they knew well, were eyewitnesses of Jesus' miracles. Although for non-believers, this is not considered evidence in and of itself, Rune Arnhoff says.

Both in response to the question about whether Jesus walked on water and whether he turned water into wine, it is the youngest and oldest age groups that believe the most. While 23 percent of those between 18-29 years old and 22 percent of those over 60 years old answer "yes" when asked if they believe, only 17 percent in the age group of 40 to 49 years old do the same.

- It is natural that older people are more religious. They have been more religiously integrated from their childhoods. Many have read the Bible, and gone to church regularly. It is more surprising that young people believe that Jesus performed miracles, he says.

There also seem to be some geographical differences. More people in the south and in the west of Norway believe that the biblical events have occurred, while fewer are as faithful in the east of Norway, in Trøndelag, and in Northern Norway.

Contact person:

- Rune Arnhoff, Nordic Bible Museum, tel: 913 94 354

Newswire is a commission-funded news agency. Articles, pictures, and videos are free to use in the press. This article is written for the Nordic Bible Museum.