



General:

During a discussion with the Pharisees Jesus says:

- ***In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. (John 8:17)***

Jesus talks here about **your law**, i.e. the law of the Pharisees, whereby a case is considered proven on the testimony of **two people**.

A fact is accepted as being true in our jurisprudence too, if two people testify the same thing.

However, the law of Moses declares:

- ***One witness is not enough to convict anyone accused of any crime or offense they may have committed. A matter (Hebrew: *dabar* = word) must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. (Deuteronomy 19:15)***

In a case concerning the **transgression of the Divine law, witnesses, not people**, are named.

There appears, therefore, to be a distinction between the legislation of the world and the legislation concerning a spiritual matter.

In the texts discussed in this study, Jesus mentions two or three **witnesses** and two or three **gathered**, i.e. **not necessarily people**.

The Bible texts discussed in this study.

In His teaching Jesus said:

- ***But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'* (Matthew 18:16)**
- ***For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them. (Matthew 18:20)***

In His teaching Jesus declares that **two or three witnesses** are needed in a case of accusation. He also says that He attends a meeting whenever **two or three are present in His Name**.

But what does He mean in fact?

Do there have to be three, or are two also enough, or when are two enough, and when do there have to be three?

There is no arbitrariness as far as Jesus is concerned. He is never unclear in His teaching. He must have a very good reason if there is a possibility of choice.

That reason is examined in this study.

Two or three witnesses.

Jesus teaches:

- ***If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. (Matthew 18:15)***

The Greek word that is translated here as **'point out their fault'** is also translated as: **convince, refute.**

If this brother does not listen to you:

- ... take **one or two** others along, so that every **matter (rhema)** may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. (Matthew 18:16)

'Rhema' stands for an authoritative word in a specific situation.

Jesus says **literally**: ... so that each authoritative word be established on the mouth of two witnesses or of three.

Stated otherwise: ... so that each authoritative word be established by what two or three witnesses say.

As far as Jesus is concerned the 'authoritative word' can only mean the Word of God, as He has taught it Himself and as it is recorded in the Bible.

Interpretation of the text:

'Pointing out a fault' to a brother, or 'refuting' or 'convincing' him is only authoritative if it takes place on the grounds of the testimony of the Bible.

If the brother is not convinced by just one person, Jesus advises calling for the help of a second witness.

This is someone who has perhaps not at all seen the brother's transgression, but someone who must confirm and make the word, the **Biblical 'rhema'**, of the first person authoritative.

In the church these two people are only able to 'refute' or 'convince' with authority if **both of them** accept the authority of Jesus and the Bible and want to consistently implement it in their own life.

In this situation Jesus will consider two witnesses to be sufficient, because they will allow the Word of God to speak in their testimony.

If the person who has to be warned, refuted, convinced, does not accept the testimony of these two persons it then becomes necessary 'to bring along' a third witness, who has to lend authority to their words.

This third witness can only be the Bible, in view of the light of the teaching of Jesus Christ, as the Living Word and Head of the Church.

Conclusion:

In the church a verdict will only become authoritative if the verdict is in accordance with the Word of God.

That is the case if two people, in submission to the authority of the Bible, say the same thing, or seek together what the Bible, as the third 'Witness' says about a specific situation.



The same applies to the texts:

- *Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. (1 Timothy 5:19)*
- *Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. (Hebrews 10:28)*

Where two or three gather in my name.

Jesus said:

- *For where **two or three gather in my name**, there am I with them. (Matthew 18:20)*

This text is also discussed briefly in the study 'In my name / In the name of'.¹

In that study it is explained that when Jesus says '**in my name**' that actually means: into, or **coming under My authority**.

Gathered in the name of Jesus therefore means that the people who take part in the meeting submit themselves personally to the authority of Jesus and, in their discussion, seek to ascertain what Jesus has to say about the subjects at hand.

Two people with this background will thus suffice, so that their decisions will be carried out, as Jesus said:

- *... if **two of you on earth** agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. (Matthew 18:19)*

Caution:

It is possible that one, or both of these persons have not submitted themselves to the authority of Jesus.

The gathering only takes place '**in the name of Jesus**' if **all** those present decide to examine what **Gods Word, as extra Person present** in the meeting, has to say to them and also wish to submit themselves to that.

Only then will Jesus also be in their midst.

In such a meeting it is a blessing when decisions are taken which fall under the authority of Jesus, because then He will also associate Himself with the execution thereof!!

¹ Study: In my name / In the name of.