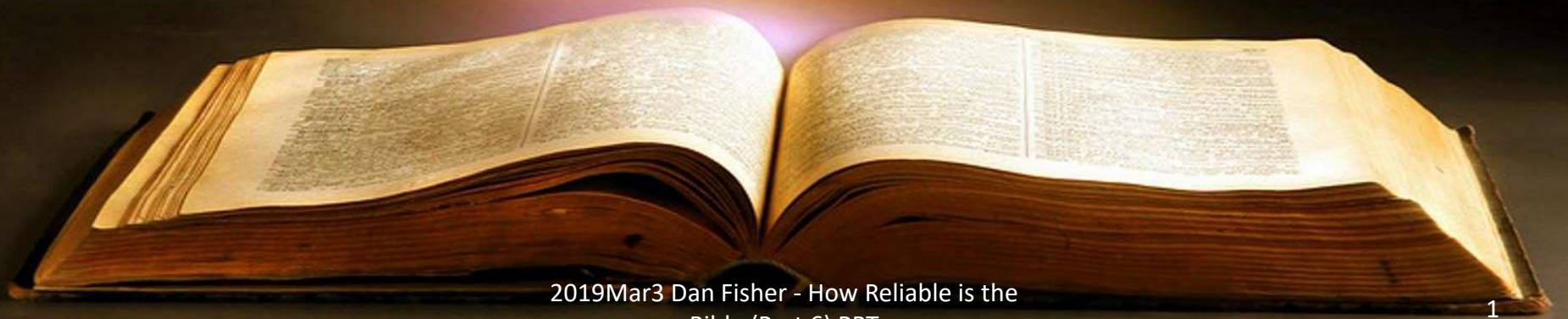


How reliable is the Bible?

Part 6: "The canon is closed!"



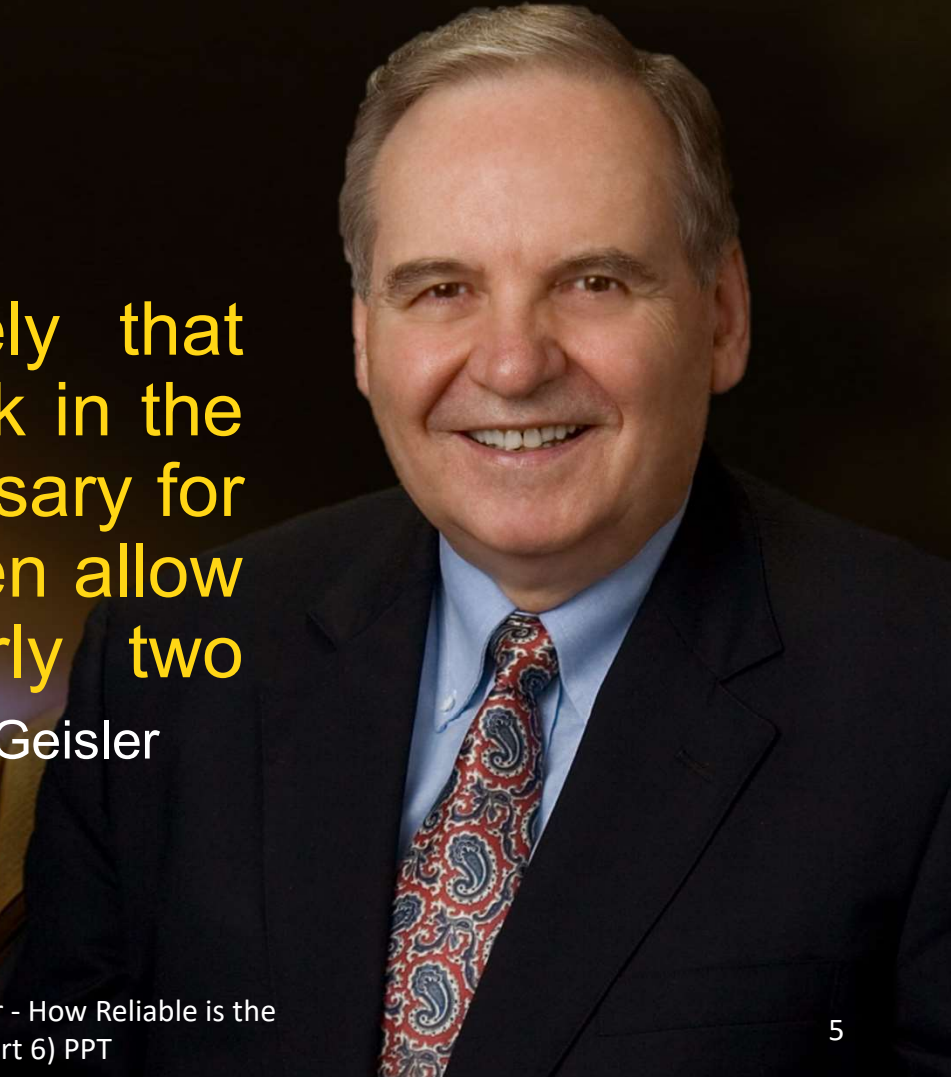
The Jews considered the Old Testament canon closed almost 400 years before Jesus was born.

From the time of Irenaeus in the 2nd century A.D. the church was already referring to the Canon of Truth and by 350 A.D., in the time of Athanasius, the Bible was accepted as the completed, established canon of Scripture.

1. One of the most important points of canonicity is: the canon is closed

But what if we are missing an essential inspired passage in our Bibles?

Eph 1:11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,

A portrait of Norman Geisler, a middle-aged man with short, light-colored hair, smiling. He is wearing a dark suit jacket, a light blue dress shirt, and a red and blue paisley tie. The background is dark.

“It seems highly unlikely that God would inspire a book in the first century that is necessary for faith and practice and then allow it to be lost for nearly two thousand years.”

Norman Geisler

2. It is certain that there will not be any additions to the Old Testament.

The Jews were very careful when handling Scripture:

They possessed an almost “superstitious”
reverence for the Bible.

- There were specifications not only for the kind of skins to be used and the size of the columns, but there was even a religious ritual necessary for the scribe to perform before writing the name of God.
- Rules governed the kind of ink used, dictated the spacing of words, and prohibited writing anything from memory.
- The lines, and even the letters, were counted methodically.
- If a manuscript was found to contain even one mistake, it was discarded and destroyed.

3. The only additions to the Bible would be to the New Testament.

4. Many books have been suggested as candidates for canonization in the N.T. only to fail under strict scrutiny.

The Book of Thomas:

“Let Mary go away from us, because women are not worthy of life. Lo, I shall lead her in order to make her a male, so that she too may become a living spirit, resembling you males. For every woman who makes herself male will enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Gospel of Thomas, 94.197

The apocryphal forgery known as the *Gospel of Peter*:

“Now when the soldiers saw that, they woke up the centurion and the elders (for they also were there keeping watch). While they were yet telling them the things which they had seen, they saw three men come out of the tomb, two of them sustaining the other one, and a cross following after them. The heads of the two they saw had heads that reached up to heaven, but the head of him that was led by them went beyond heaven. And they heard a voice out of the heavens saying, ‘Have you preached unto them that sleep?’ The answer that was heard from the cross was, ‘Yes!’”

5. The canon is closed theologically & historically – it is open only hypothetically.

- **The canon is closed theologically:**

- In the last days God speaks through Christ –

Heb 1:1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, ²has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, ...

- The apostolic age ended with the apostles –

Acts 1:21-22 “Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²²beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.”

- God's revelation is complete –

Rev 22:18-19 For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; ¹⁹and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. ²⁰He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! ²¹The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

- **The canon is closed historically:**

No one with verified “apostolic gifts” has arisen since the death of John.

- **The canon is open hypothetically:**

It is historically unlikely & providentially improbable that we will discover a “lost” manuscript qualified to be added to the New Testament.

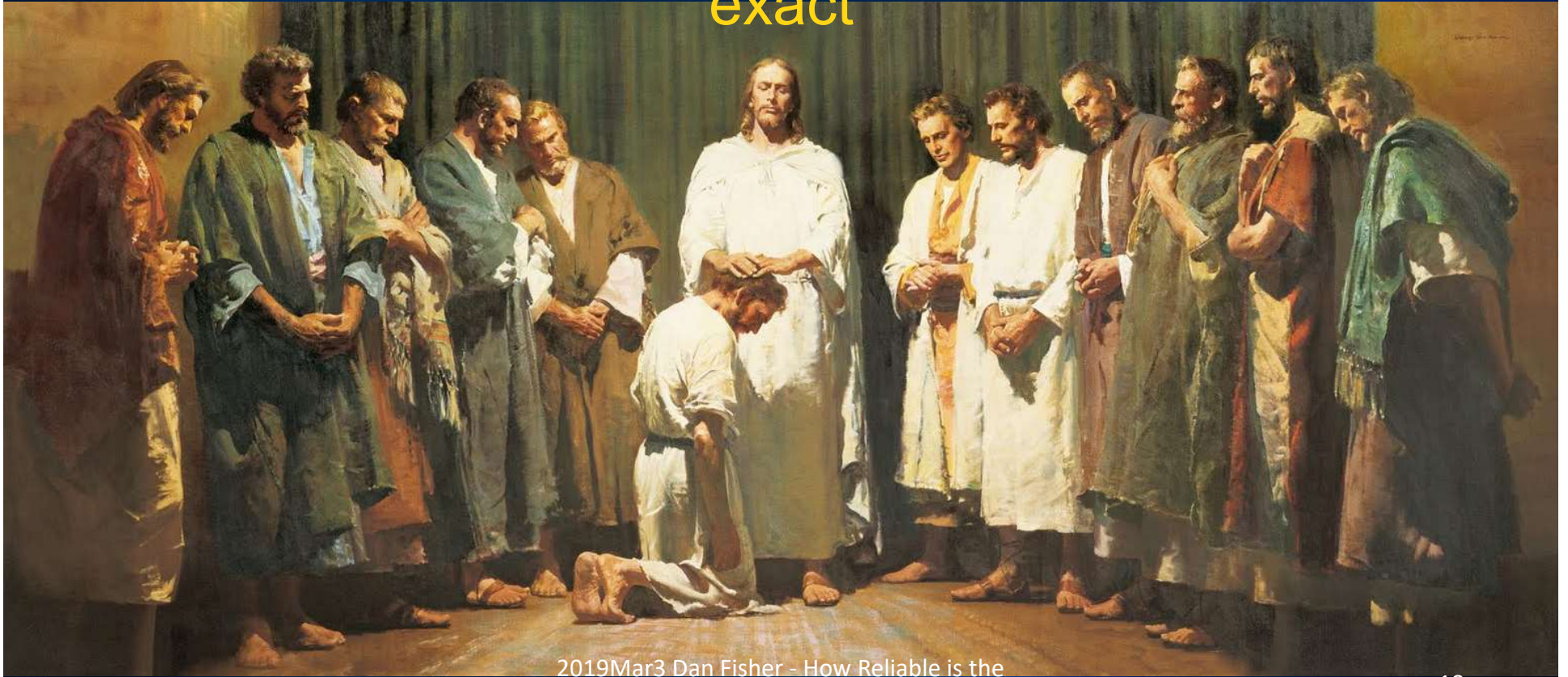
Remember:

For a book to be included in the New Testament canon, among the many tests it had to pass, it had to pass the “Apostolicity Test” – meaning, it had to be written by an apostle or under the direct supervision of an apostle by an associate.

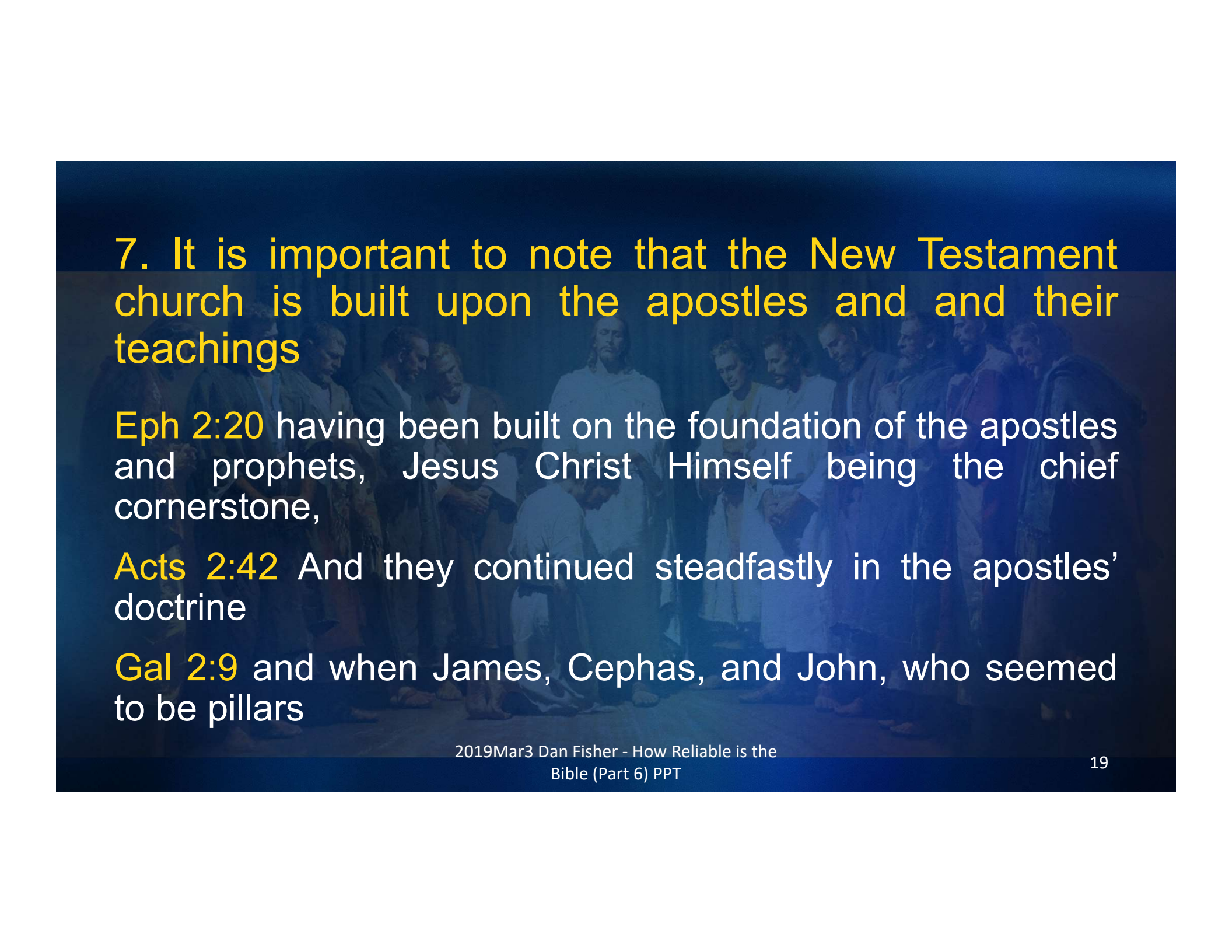
New Testament written by apostles or under the close scrutiny of an apostle:

1. **Matthew**, an apostle, wrote the book of Matthew
2. **Mark** was an associate of Peter – 1 Pet 5:13, Acts 12:25, 2 Tim 4:11
3. **Luke** was an associate of Paul – Col 4:14, Phile 24
4. **John**, an apostle, wrote John, John 1, 2, & 3, & The Revelation
5. **Acts** was written by Luke – Acts 1:1
6. **Paul**, an apostle, wrote Romans – Philemon
7. **Hebrews** was written by revelation from God (1:1) & was confirmed by the apostles (2:3-4) – Paul is generally believed to be the author
8. **James** wrote the book of James – he was the half brother of Jesus (Js 1:1, Gal 1:19) & was the leader of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13, Gal 2:9)
9. **Peter**, an apostle, wrote 1 & 2 Peter
10. **Jude** was written by Jesus' half brother – Jude 1:1, Mt 13:55

6. The qualifications for apostleship were very exact



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7. It is important to note that the New Testament church is built upon the apostles and their teachings

Eph 2:20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine

Gal 2:9 and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars

8. An apostle had to meet these strict requirements:

- They had to be among those who had followed Jesus throughout His earthly ministry

Acts 1:21-22 “Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²²beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.”

- They had to be hand picked by Jesus

They could not “choose themselves to follow (Mt 8:19-22)

Mt 4:18-22

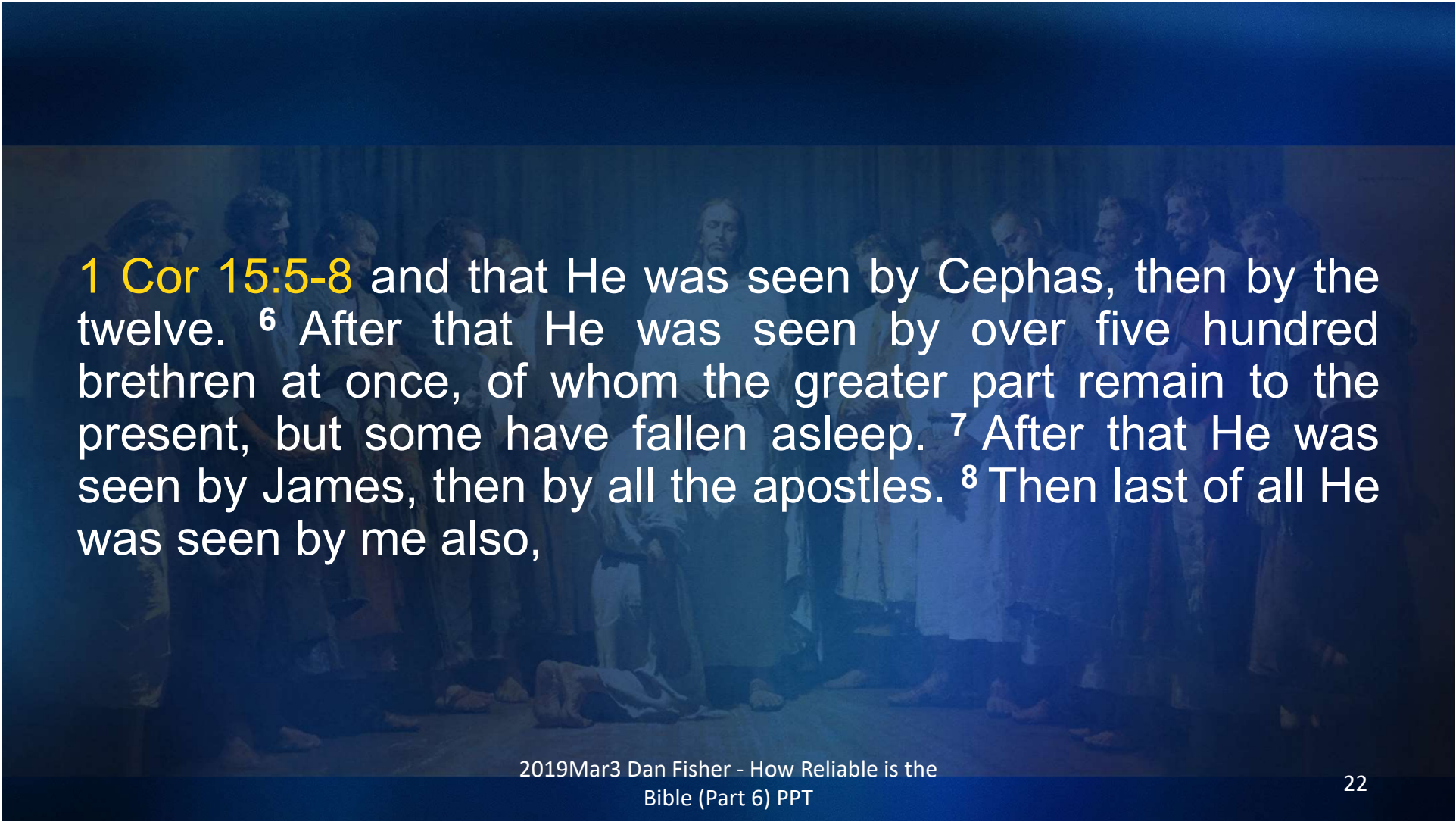
Mt 9:9

Mt 10:1-4

Lk 6:13-16

- They had to have “seen” the resurrected Jesus

1 Cor 9:1 Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?



1 Cor 15:5-8 and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. ⁶ After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. ⁷ After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. ⁸ Then last of all He was seen by me also,

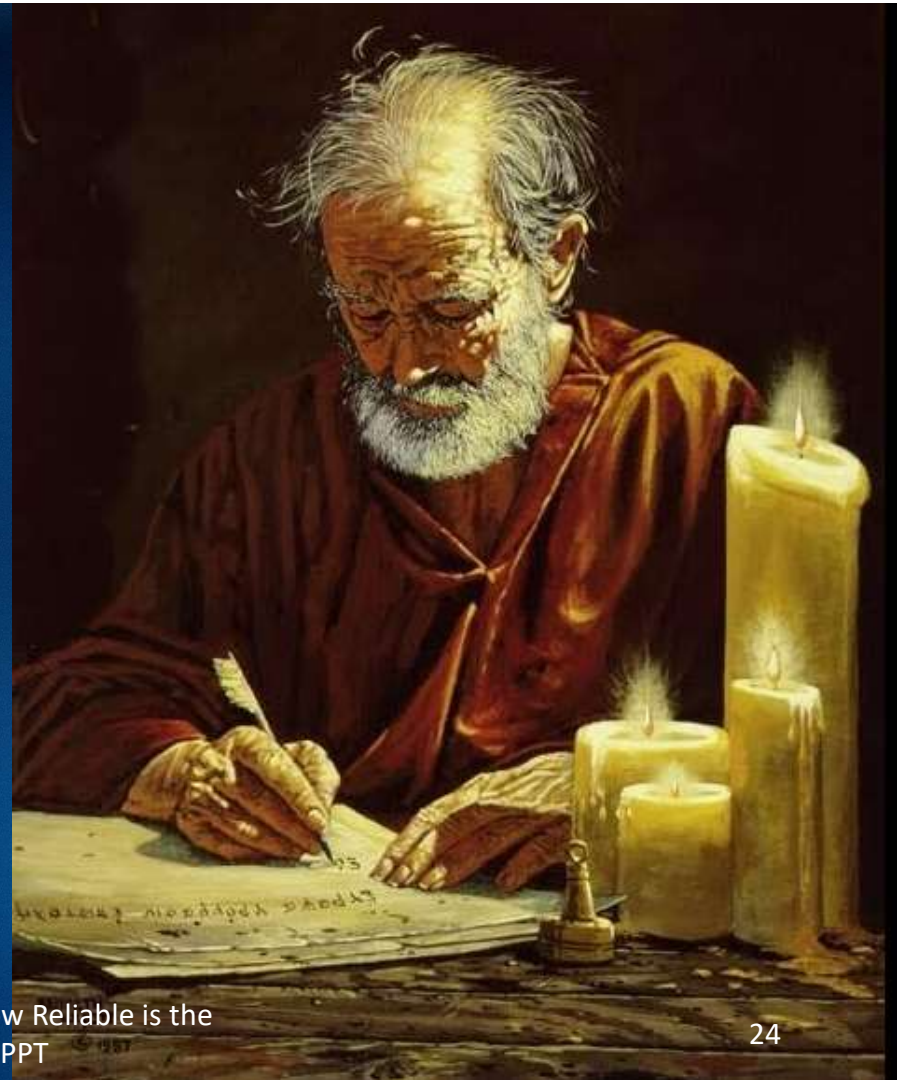
- 
- They had to give evidence of “the signs of an apostle”

2 Cor 12:12 Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.

Some ask how Paul could
have been an apostle

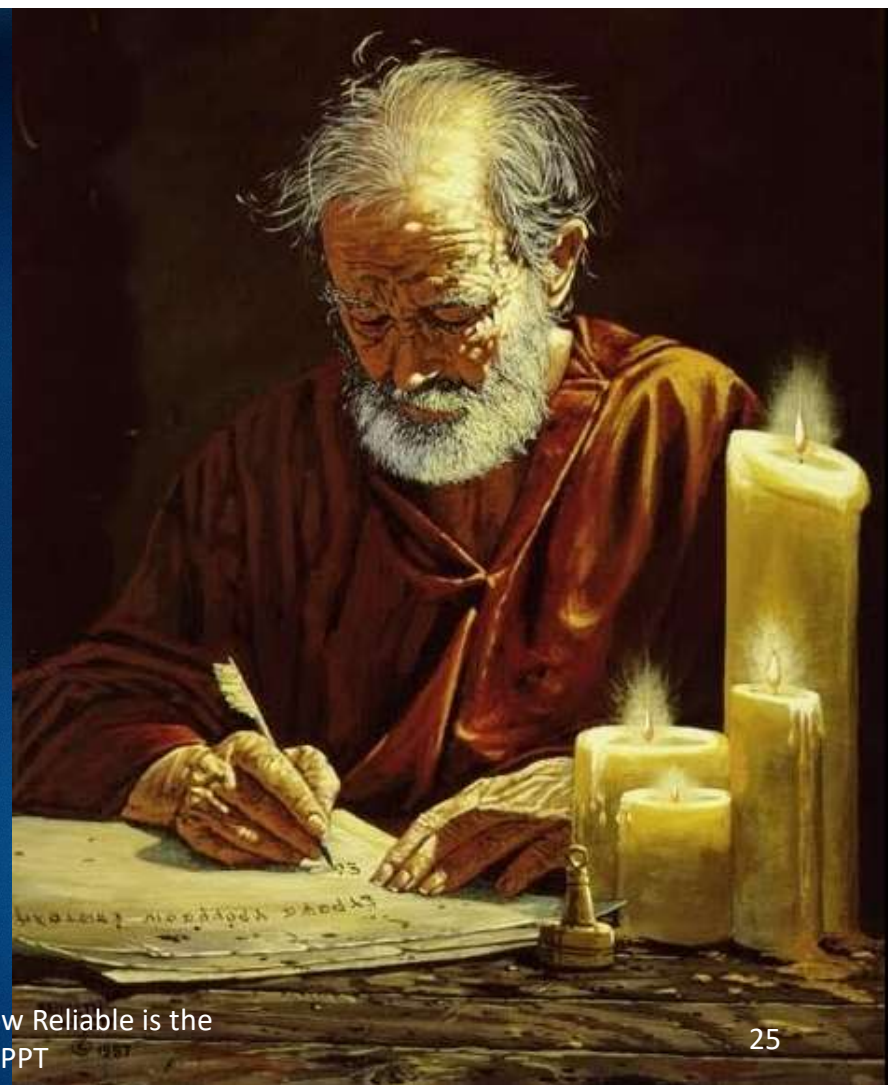
1 Cor 15:8 ... as by one born
out of due time.

- He was handpicked by
Jesus



Acts 22:6-9 “Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me. ⁷ And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ ⁸ So I answered, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.’ ⁹ “And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me.

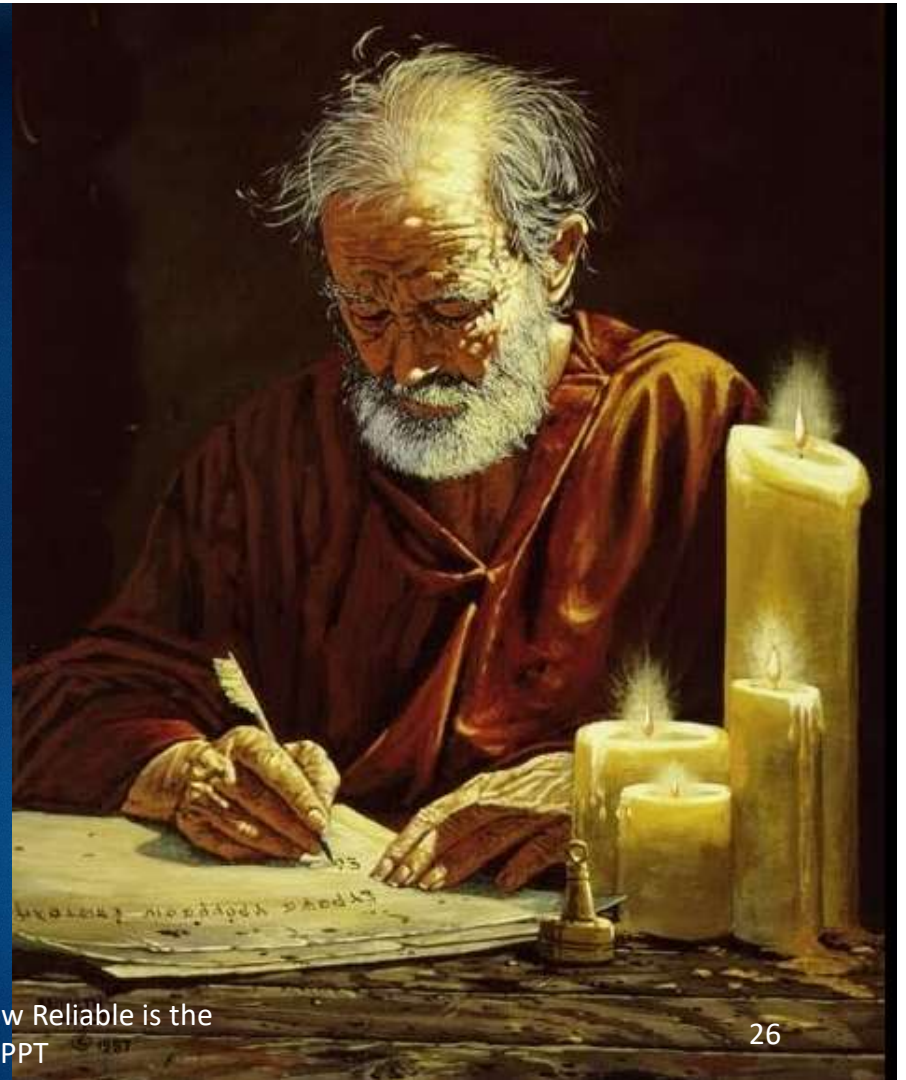
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- He saw the resurrected Jesus

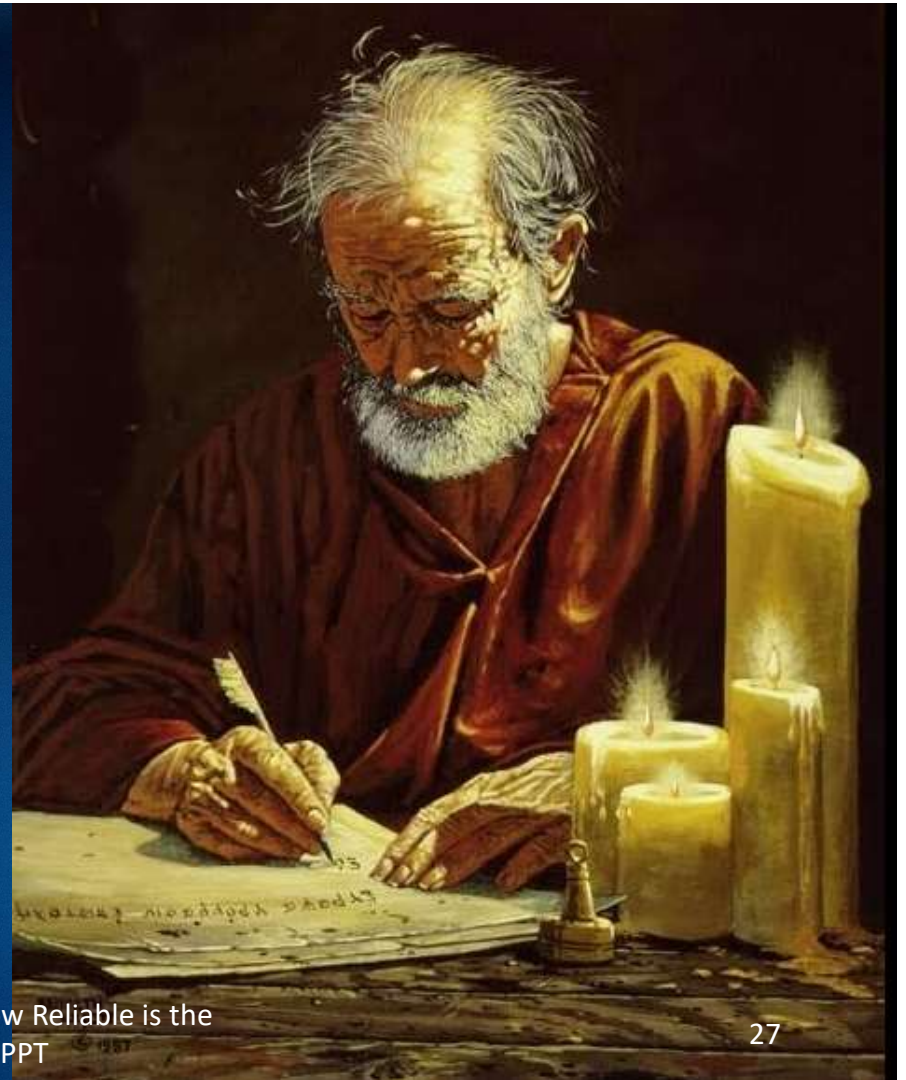
1 Cor 9:1 Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?

1 Cor 15:8 Then last of all He was seen by me also,



- He gave evidence of the “signs of an apostle”

2 Cor 12:12 Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.



It is safe to say that no other people alive after the time of the apostles can lay claim to “true” apostleship.

Therefore, it also safe to say that, other than with the discovery of some authentic writings that meet the test of apostolicity, the New Testament canon is closed!