

## About the Authors

Equipped with only an English degree and a fervent love for God's word, I embarked on this study 40 years ago, give or take a few. It is loosely based on email correspondence with three other "plain" folk—by which I mean, none had any college pedigrees—Carl Hopper, Charlie Burt, and Raymond Prosser.

Carl was a janitor in Tacoma, Washington, a genius at ferreting out scripture's meaning. The immediate question that many will ask is, "This man, Carl, was a genius to who? You?" While Carl and I were close friends, we had our share of arguments. As time and maturity have granted me clarity, my reliance on him during my youth was not based on "hero worship." I remember that after Sunday services, most of the young folks would flock to his modest home and continue studying the Bible.

I can tell you stories of folks challenging him on some scrap of verse. Carl's method of teaching was to turn the issue around and answer with a question. (I'm sure he learned this from the Apostle Paul.) Most of the time these folks could only answer with an open gape and look of puzzlement.

One time, the president of the bible college in Kirkland, Washington, brought Carl and his wife to the college to speak with some of the professors there. This humble janitor, having no formal education, were flummoxed by some of his statements/questions. Although I was not there, it seemed that Carl had injured their pride. It didn't take the college long to issue letters to the local churches of Christ advising them of keeping the man as far from the pulpit as possible. When I asked him about it, he didn't really want to speak of it, but it was obvious that he was hurt. His wife, Ada Hopper, was more forthcoming. She stated plainly, "Carl just asked them questions they didn't have answers for."

Carl went to be with Christ in January 2000.

I have never met Charlie Burt or Raymond Prosser. However, Charlie and I have become as close as possible via email correspondence. He also was a personal

friend and admirer of Carl Hopper. You'll find some of his comments within this work. Again, he has no college degree but has keen insight. Unfortunately, the little church of Christ where he taught felt that his insight didn't square with their views of the bible. They shut his class down and he and his wife got the message loud and clear. He revealed that over the decades, he'd run into members of the congregation, but avoided any "religious" discussions.

Raymond Prosser is a retired oil well worker in Texas. He is what you would call a "savant," having an almost scary ability at seeing things in the bible no one has noticed before. Now that may garner some laughs in certain circles, but until you've read some of his stuff, he can't be sold short just because he's a stone deaf retired oil field worker living in Texas.

The one thing the four of us have in common is what has also caused a lot of anger and annoyance from the church of Christ: our interpretation of the Second Coming of Christ, and, to a lesser degree, how we see the book of Revelation. One old preacher literally yelled at me while I was at his home in Purdy, Washington. When he discovered I was studying Revelation, he demanded, "Why in the Sam Hill are studying that? That has nothing to do with what you need to know!"

There you have it; four untrained, ignorant country boys, thinking we know a thing or two more than some college-bred professor. One thing is certain: our "ignorance" gives us room to modify or change our opinion on a given matter. The colleges demand unbending adherence to their interpretative methods. No one knows it all, I don't care how long you've spent in a classroom environment. And the academic who tells me they've never went back and modified a past belief is using the truth economically.

Take our calloused hands and walk with us into these wondrous halls.

Terry DeLaney  
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