

Chapter & Verse Insertions in the Bible

By Jim Myers

Chapter and **verse markers** act like traffic signs for Bible readers. They play major roles in creating contexts and how readers link words together in stories. They slow readers down, pause readers or bring readers to a full stop. When they are inserted in wrong places, they can literally destroy a context and keep readers from seeing what the Source wanted them to see. Who decided to insert them in the Bible?



The most ancient manuscripts of the books of our Bibles did not contain the chapter and verse divisions in the numbered form familiar to modern readers. **Archbishop Stephen Langton** and **Cardinal Hugo de Sancto Caro** developed different schemas for systematic division of the Bible in the early 13th century. It is the system of **Archbishop Langton** on which the modern chapter divisions are based. These chapter divisions have become nearly universal.

With the invention of the printing press and the translation of the Bible into English, *Old Testament* versifications were made that correspond predominantly with the existing Hebrew full stops, with a few isolated exceptions. Most attribute these to **Rabbi Isaac Nathan ben Kalonymus's** work for the **first Hebrew Bible concordance around 1440.**

The first person to divide New Testament into chapters and verses was Italian Dominican biblical scholar **Santi Pagnini** (1470–1541), but his system was never widely adopted. Robert Estienne created an alternate numbering in his 1551 edition of the Greek New Testament which was also used in his 1553 publication of the Bible in French. Estienne's system of division was widely adopted, and it is this system which is found in almost all modern Bibles.

The first *English New Testament* to use the verse divisions was a **1557** translation by **William Whittingham** (c. 1524–1579). The first Bible in English to use both chapters and verses was the Geneva Bible published shortly afterwards in 1560.

Our advice for **Bible Explorers and Lives 1st Teams** is to totally ignore chapter and verse numbers. Let the flow of the story guide you and define the context, or as we like to say:

Let the biblical text tell its own stories.

This helps increase order, decrease chaos, and make our world more Shalom!