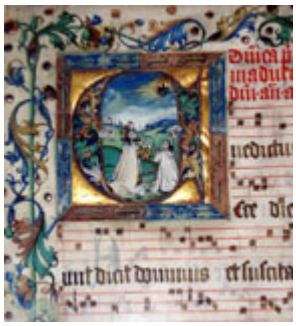# “How Did the Bible Get Divided into Chapters and Verses?”

**How Did the Bible Get Divided into Chapters and Verses?**

I’m glad you asked! Many people don’t realize that the original biblical documents were written without these artificial divisions, which turn out to be unfortunate in some places, with context apparently ignored. For example, the creation account of Genesis 1 ends with verse 31: “God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.” The chapter division ends before the end of the story of Creation Week; it would certainly make more sense to put 2:1-3 with the rest of Genesis 1:

> 2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts.
> 2:2 By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.
> 2:3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.



You may be surprised to learn that the Bible was not divided this way until the Middle Ages. However, if you’ve ever seen a medieval illuminated manuscript (with the colorful and gilded artwork), you’ll note there are no verse

numbers on these magnificent pieces of art.

The Hebrew Old Testament was divided into verses by Rabbi Nathan in 1448.{1} Stephen Langton (c 1150-1228), an Archbishop of Canterbury, is believed to be the first person to divide the Bible into defined chapters.{2}

Robert Estienne (1503-1559), also known as Robert Stephens or Stephanus, was a 16th century printer in Paris. He divided the New Testament into verses, and was the first to print the Bible divided into standard numbered verses in 1555.{3} In 1560, the Geneva Bible, an English translation of the Bible made by the English exiles in Geneva, first divided the entire Bible into the verses that we still use today.{4}

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

**Notes**

1. www.worldinvisible.com/library/kenyon/storyofbible/2ck05.htm
2. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen_Langton
3. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Estienne
4. www.learnthebible.org/Divisions%20of%20the%20Bible.htm

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