

As with any Bible study aid, chapter and verse divisions should be considered as just that — an aid. They are no less and no more inspired than a brotherhood commentary, a “Truth” tract, or the words of a *Hymns For Worship* song. They aid us in our endeavor to dig deeply and understand the text of God’s Word.

It is written somewhere in the Bible, “Study to show yourself approved unto God.” May we use man’s uninspired divisions of God’s inspired Word, making it our ambition to understand each and every book, chapter and verse.



— [Announcements] —

“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray”

— James 5:13 —

Jo Byrnes ✦ Betty Cannon
Sleatha Gore ✦ Faye Kilpatrick

Gospel Meeting in Cleveland, Ohio

Brother Hinds is scheduled to be away from our pulpit Sunday, June 7th. He will be preaching in Cleveland, Ohio, for the Lorain Avenue congregation the week of June 7–12. Please pray for his safe travels and a good meeting with these brethren.

*New Teaching Quarter
Begins Next Sunday, May 31*

↪ Chiefland Church of Christ ↪

Meeting at 211 NE 2nd Street in *beautiful* Chiefland, Florida
PO Box 2539 ✦ Chiefland, FL 32644 ✦ (352) 493-1242

THINGS ABOVE

“Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth”

— [Colossians 3:1–2] —

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Chapter and Verse Divisions of the Bible

By Marc Hinds

Can you imagine not having the reference aid of chapters and verses? If a preacher wanted to cite a Bible passage, he would have to say what book it was in and leave it up to the audience to search for it on their own.

When Matthew quotes “a voice was heard in Ramah,” his citation is, “what had been spoken through *Jeremiah the prophet*,” rather than simply citing Jeremiah 31:15 (*see* Matthew 2:17–18). When Herod demanded to know where the Christ was to be born, he was quickly told, “In Bethlehem of Judea; *for this is what has been written by the prophet*,” rather than “for this is what Micah said in chapter 5 verse 2” (*see* Matthew 2:6–7). Phrases like, “One has testified somewhere” (Hebrews 2:6) or “With this the words of the Prophets agree” (Acts 15:15) similarly denote

general references to the Old Testament, even though a specific passage was being quoted. But today, we know right where to turn when Peter in Acts 3:25 quotes from Genesis 22:18 or when Paul cites Psalm 2:7 in Acts 13:33.

Fortunately, all the books of our modern Bibles have been divided into chapters and verses. But these divisions evolved over several centuries.

The chapter divisions came along first. The original manuscripts of the Bible were often written without spaces between the words, much less with divisions between chapters and verses. They looked something like this making it very difficult to read. It was not until around 1227 that Stephen Langton, a professor at the University of Paris, divided the Bible into the modern chapter divisions as we know them now.

The verse divisions were not developed until much later. The year was 1551 when Robert Stephanus, a Parisian printer, published for the very first time a New Testament with both chapter and verse divisions. (He made the verse divisions while on a horseback journey to Paris.) A few years later, in 1560, the Geneva Bible was the first entire English Bible to be divided into chapters and verses. For 4½ centuries, these same divisions have remained virtually unchanged.

Although the chapter and verse divisions are an invaluable aid to Bible study, they can at times create a learning barrier. Remember that these divisions are not inspired, even though they are dividing up inspired writings. Consider a couple of examples from the book of Acts.

In the beginning of Acts 2, the Holy Spirit is poured out. But on whom? Earlier in chapter 1, there is a reference to as many of 120 people being assembled together (Acts 1:15). It was on this occasion that Matthias was chosen to replace Judas (Acts 1:16–26).

When we come to chapter 2, verse 1 reads, “*they* were all with one accord in one place.” The antecedent of “*they*” is found in Acts 1:26. This awkward chapter division causes many to overlook that the “*they*” in Acts 2:1 is not the 120 of Acts 1:15 but the “eleven apostles” of Acts 1:26. This interpretation has serious implications for understanding the scope and role of baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is another lesson in and of itself.

Less serious but equally important is an awkward division between chapters 4 and 5 of Acts. The fulfillment of the needy saints in Jerusalem was being met by the contributions of generous members. The principle example is that of Barnabas, as recorded in Acts 4:32–37. In contrast to him is the example of Ananias and Sapphira. Because their story takes up the first eleven verses of Acts 5, very often the immediate context is overlooked, and thus, the thrust of the lesson is lost.

Ananias and Sapphira wanted to be just like Barnabas. They wanted everyone else to see how selfless they were, just like the Son of Encouragement (Acts 4:36). Instead, they ended up dead because they lied to God. The primary problem with the lying couple was not their inability to tell the truth, but that they were selfish, proud and worldly. Recognizing that Acts 5:1–11 goes with the last six verses of chapter 4 helps to make this point. Worldliness and pride are well and alive today, so the point still needs to be driven home.