It is the Weekly Readers’ Mailbag time. Today I take on three very interesting and unusually diverse questions: where we got chapters and verses from in the New Testament; how we know that earliest Christians (before Paul) understood Jesus’ death to be a sacrifice for sins; and whether I get upset that my work is used by Muslims in order to discount Christianity. These are hot topics!

**QUESTION**: When did scribes start dividing NT manuscripts into chapters and verses? As I understand it, early manuscripts did not even have punctuation marks. A related question is: did early Christians always read these texts/books, either by themselves or to a congregation, from beginning to end in one sitting? I imagine it would be very difficult to find specific passages without chapters and verses.

**RESPONSE**: Ah, this is an important question, and one many people have never raised; moreover, those who have raised it often have no way of knowing how to answer it. As to chapters and verses, here is what I have to say on the matter in my textbook on the New Testament (which just came out in the new 6th edition!):

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Given the fact that ancient manuscripts did not use punctuation, paragraph divisions, or even spaces to separate words, it will come as no surprise to learn that the chapter and verse divisions found in modern translations of the New Testament are not...

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