

# **Dr. Ted Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Deuteronomy: Institutions, Law Session 17, 6-min. Video Overview**

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You ever pick up an ancient text, read a line, and just think, what on earth does this have to do with me? Yeah, you're definitely not alone. A lot of these ancient laws can feel, well, strange, maybe even totally outdated. But what if there's a way to unlock them? A framework that makes them make sense, even today? Well, that's what we're going to do.

Let's dive in. So here's the big puzzle, right? How do you bridge a 3,000-year gap in time? How can a legal code written for a specific group of people in a totally different world possibly make sense for us? That's the question we're going to unpack piece by piece. I mean, take this rule from Deuteronomy.

At first glance, it seems pretty straightforward. But what does it actually mean? Does it mean that women can't wear pants? Some people have for sure thought so. And that's exactly where you run into trouble.

When you try to apply these ancient rules literally, you can get some, well, some really bizarre and even harmful results. Yeah, when we just try to copy and paste these ancient rules into our modern world without getting the context, we can wind up in some seriously confusing spots. And this isn't just some academic thought experiment.

It has had some very real and sometimes painful consequences. You know, there's this story about a pastor who took that verse to heart. He insisted that all the girls at his school could only wear skirts.

Well, one day, one of the students was playing baseball, and she slid into second base in a skirt. She tore her legs up so badly she was left with scars for the rest of her life. All because of a 3000-year-old dress code.

That right there just shows you a simple copy-paste approach doesn't work. There has to be a better way to understand this. So to find that better way, we've got to go back to the very beginning.

Before we get into all the specific case law that can sound so strange to our ears, we need to get a handle on the moral foundation they're all built on. And that, of course, is the Ten Commandments. Think of the Ten Commandments as the big guiding principles.

The preamble to the whole Constitution. They're the general stipulations. Now, to make them a little easier to remember, a biblical scholar, Dr. Ted Hildebrandt, came up with a pretty clever mnemonic.

B-I-G--L-C-- S-P-A-M-S. It might sound a little silly, I know. But it is an unbelievably useful tool for getting this moral core locked in your brain.

Okay, let's break it down real quick. The first part, B-I-G, is all about our relationship with God. No blasphemy, no idols, no other gods.

Simple enough. Then the rest of it L-C-- S-P-A-M-S, is all about how we treat each other. Don't lie, don't covet, don't steal, honor your parents, no adultery, no murder, and finally, remember the Sabbath.

See? This is the moral bedrock for everything else that's But here's the thing. The law in Deuteronomy was so much more than just a list of moral rules for people. Moses was actually laying out a national constitution for Israel.

He was building the entire framework for a functioning society, complete with its own institutions of government. And this is a really, really important point. We're not just looking at some religious text here.

We're looking at a blueprint for a whole society. It set up the rules for how prophets would be held accountable, how judges would deliver justice, and maybe, most importantly, how the kings would be kept in check. I mean, just look at the system of checks and balances they built right in.

Prophets couldn't just get up and say whatever they wanted. What they said had to line up with what God had already revealed. Judges were supposed to be local, fair, and incorruptible.

The idea was that justice should be for everyone, not just for those who could afford it. And the kings? Whoa. Their power was seriously limited to prevent them from becoming tyrants.

They weren't allowed to build up huge armies, get tangled up in foreign alliances, or get super rich off the backs of the people. Okay, so we've got the moral core and the national framework. But then, fast forward a few centuries, and two absolutely pivotal figures show up who completely change how the law is understood.

Jesus and Paul. Now, they didn't just toss the old law out the window. Not at all.

They looked deeper at its true purpose. So Jesus basically takes the law and internalizes it. He says, look, it's not enough to just not murder someone.

You can't even have that kind of hate in your heart. Your motive is what really matters. Paul, on the other hand, comes at it from a slightly different angle.

He sees the law almost like a doctor's diagnostic tool. Its main job isn't to make us good, but to show us just how not good we are. To reveal that we need grace.

This quote from Paul just perfectly nails his perspective. He says the law is like a schoolmaster. It's not the final destination.

It's the teacher, the guide, the thing that points us towards something else. It holds up the perfect standard, shows us we can't possibly meet it on our own, and basically leads us to ask for help. So with all of this context in our back pocket, the moral foundation, the

national constitution, and the powerful reinterpretations from Jesus and Paul, we can finally put together a practical toolkit for applying these ancient principles to our lives right now.

And here it is. It's actually a pretty simple three-step method. First, you look at the law, and you identify the specific cultural detail, the part that's tied to that ancient time and place.

Second, you dig a little deeper and find the timeless universal principle that's underneath it all. And third, you take that universal principle, and you reapply it to our modern world. Let's see this thing in action.

There was an ancient law that said you had to build a small wall called a parapet around your flat roof. Okay, step one. What's the cultural particular? Well, back then, people used their flat roofs like we use a patio.

They hung out up there. Most of us don't do that today. Step two, what's the universal principle? Simple.

A homeowner is responsible for keeping people safe on their property. And step three, the modern application, is putting a fence around your swimming pool. It's the exact same principle, just in a totally different context.

And now for the last, and maybe most crucial piece of the whole puzzle, Jesus himself reveals that some of the laws in the Old Testament weren't even God's perfect ideal. Take the law that allowed for divorce. Jesus says that wasn't there because God was celebrating it.

It was a concession. It was an accommodation for a broken, hard-hearted human culture to prevent something even worse from happening. This shows us that the law itself could be flexible, adapting to human reality.

So what does this all mean? It means these ancient laws aren't just a random list of do's and don'ts. They're a whole library of timeless principles just dressed up in the culture of their day. And that leaves us with a pretty big question for our own time, doesn't it? If we look at the laws, the rules, the social norms we live by today, what are the universal principles behind them? And are they still doing the job they were meant to do?