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Biblical Minimalism
by Bill Lockwood

What is biblical minimalism? Biblical minimalism refers to a philosophical position taken by “biblical scholars” who “minimalize” the biblical text as an authoritative source for reliable historical and factual information about the past (Randall Price, *The Stones Cry Out*, 386). In simpler terms, it refers to those whose predisposition toward the Bible is that it *is not* God’s inspired and Holy Word, regardless of evidence to the contrary. “Predisposition” is the key element here. It characterizes many so-called biblical scholars who use as their beginning point in their study the *assumption* that the Bible is merely an uninspired collection of materials simply of antique interest.

An example of biblical minimalism is pointed out by author Craig Evans in his recent excellent book, *Jesus and His World: The Archaeological Evidence*. Evans points out that many scholars argue that David and Solomon are fictional characters, and that there was no kingdom of Israel reaching back into the 10th century B.C. It begins with the *assumption* that the Bible is wrong. Further, they “reason,” even if they *did* exist, the level of literacy was not adequate at that time to enable them to record such chronicles of their deeds as is presented in the Old Testament (p. 1). Thanks in part to archaeology these “minimalists” are able to be exposed as wrong on all of these points pertaining to David and Solomon.

In 1993 and 1994, fragments of stone inscription dated to the ninth-century B.C., originally incised by the king of Syria, were found at an excavation site called Tel Dan. This inscription is dated about 150 years after David became head of the United Kingdom. The first inscription contains the words, “House of David.” This was the first time that the name ‘David’ had been found in the archaeological record. As the latest *Biblical Archaeology Review* magazine notes, “a powerful argument of the so-called Biblical minimalists, who doubted the very existence of David, was blown to smithereens” (p. 22).

One such “minimalist” is liberal Welsh archaeologist Philip R. Davies who, despite the evidence, still does not wish to believe the Bible’s accuracy. Aren Maier, another archaeologist, answers him. “Davies’ attempt, at whatever cost, not to recognize [house of David] as relating to the early kingdom of Judah smacks as a desperate attempt to not allow any evidence that is contrary to his previous published opinions...” (*BAR*, 22). Davies’ steadfast disbelief of God’s Word is sadly where much of modern-day academia rests.