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THE LATTER DAYS AND THE TIME OF THE END IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

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This study attempts to investigate the two temporal expressions *b^eʿaḥ^arîṭ hayyāmîm* (the latter days) and *ʿēṭ qēš* (the time of the end) in the book of Daniel. Its main objective is to determine the precise meanings of these phrases and the relationship between them.

Chapter 1 presents a historical review of literature on the expression "the latter days" and "the time of the end." The four major schools of interpretation (Historical-critical, Preterist, Historicist, Futurist-dispensational) and their understanding of these phrases are outlined and the great divergence of opinions among scholars concerning them is noted. Furthermore, the issues and problems which this study addresses are pointed out.

The investigation of the phrase "the latter days" in chapter 2 shows that only in the Akkadian literature do we find any parallel phrases to *b^eʿaḥ^arîṭ hayyāmîm*. However, the Akkadian phrases *ana aḥrat ûmê* and *ina arkât ûmê* never appear in a religious context and lack an eschatological meaning. In the OT *b^eʿaḥ^arîṭ hayyāmîm* can refer to various periods in the history of Israel, some of which are eschatological, e.g., Deut 4:30; Jer 23:20; 30:24, and others which are not, e.g., 31:29; Jer 48:47; 49:39. In the book of Daniel the expressions *b^eʿaḥ^arîṭ hayyāmîm* (10:14) and *b^eʿaḥ^arîṭ yômayyâ* (2:28) are equivalent. Both phrases refer to the future which began in the time of Daniel and which reaches down to the time of the Messianic kingdom.

The investigation in chapter 3 indicates that the words *ʿēṭ* and *qēš* by themselves can have an eschatological meaning, e.g., *ʿēṭ* in Jer 3:17; 8:1-8; 18:23; 33:15 and *qēš* in Amos 8:2; Lam 4:18 and Ezek 7:2,3,6. The phrase *ʿēṭ qēš* or a cognate equivalent does not appear anywhere in the ancient Semitic literature outside of the book of Daniel. It is an apocalyptic terminus

technicus found five times in the latter half of the book of Daniel (8:17; 11:35,40; 12:4,9) and always refers to the apocalyptic end of world history, the final period of time leading up to the absolute End.

The final chapter presents an overall summary and presents certain conclusions concerning the two phrases "the latter days" and "the time of the end" and their interrelationship.