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 be‘arahayyāmîm (the latter days) and qēṣ (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 and 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 be‘arahayyāmîm. However, the Akkadian phrases ana ahrat ūmē and ina arkōt ūmē never appear in a religious context and lack an eschatological meaning. In the OT be‘arahayyāmîm 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 be‘arahayyāmîm (10:14) and be‘arahyōmayāpa (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 qēṣ by themselves can have an eschatological meaning, e.g., qēṣ in Jer 3:17; 8:1-8; 18:23; 33:15 and qēṣ in Amos 8:2; Lam 4:18 and Ezek 7:2,3,6. The phrase qēṣ 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.