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## **QT Questions—for Esther**

(Here's a short introduction to the book of Esther from my Study Bibles.)

- In the book of Esther, God's people are suffering in a foreign land. God is never mentioned in the story, yet He is quietly there all along—which seems to be the point. The narrative cleverly reveals Haman's folly, the royal court's greed and the Persian law's failure. This is in direct contrast to the bravery of Esther, the wisdom of Mordecai and the courage of the Jewish people—all of which, in a way, show who God is. In addition, the unlikely turns of events in Esther suggest that God is intervening to protect His people. The book of Esther shows us that God is present even when He seems distant (and silent).
- The book of Esther also shows the interrelated nature of relationships. It gives us hope that our lives are part of an unfolding story that is infinitely greater than any one of our stories on its own. Esther embraces risks for the sake of what's right—and we are called to do the same, for the unseen God and the betterment of humanity.

### **Esth 1 (9/18/23)**

1. In 9:1-12, what kind of man was King Xerxes and will you point to the verses that reflect that; why do you think Queen Vashti refused to come; why do you think the king became furious; what do you learn?
  2. In 9:13-22, what concerned the leaders from Queen Vashti's act and why; what was the new law they made up to deal with this situation and why would they; from v. 20, what kind of respect were the men seeking; in what ways were their action different from God's heart?
- The insecurity of the men here is glaring. First, the king does not handle a rejection well. Sure, his wife's refusal to come is a blow to his pride. But, how does a husband kick out his wife for that? And never mind about the lack of respect he shows with his order for her to come. Then, the men make up a brand new law, in order to keep their place of dominance, so they can have the "respect" from their wives, even if it is forced by a law they made up for their advantage. These leaders were so insecure that they must have believed if their wives had the opportunity, they will easily reject their husbands. It's safe to say, they have not earned the respect from their wives. But, may I say, if the women were more powerful, they too will misuse their power to keep their dominance. The sinfulness in us always want to exalt ourselves above others. However, in this instance, the men have the upper hand, so they will use it to keep life peaceful, that is, to their advantage. How different than our God, who came to serve and not to be served, though He had all the power to rightly demand submission from us all. Christ did not use His power to dominate, but to serve, and to love, and to exalt the lowly ones like us. We need to see our Lord Jesus and follow Him, and not the ways of this world. May Christ be our vision; may He guide our steps; may His heart move us to make our decisions, always for His glory, and not for my increase.

### **Esth 2 (9/19/23)**

1. In 2:1-18, when the king's fury subsided what happened; who are Mordecai and Esther and why conceal their identity; how was Esther received by everyone she met, including the king, and why do you think that was; how is it applicable to you?
2. In 2:19-23, what does it mean that Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate; what did he discover sitting there and what did he do; what do you learn?

- In v. 16, we are told that Esther became the Queen in the seventh year of Xerxes' reign. From 1:3, we know that Queen Vashti was deposed in his third year. So, King Xerxes lost his wife for four years, because of his fury (1:12). In his anger, he lost his mind. His pride stole the wife he adored (1:11). And we pause here a while, because most of us can identify with his foolishness. Who of us have not lost our mind and acted foolishly in our anger? In our anger, who of us have not misplaced our pride, leading us to mis-read and mis-judge our situation? When our pride is first, we destroy even the most precious places and people and things in our lives. Indeed, we are as blind as we are unwilling to see, and anger and pride makes us unwilling to see rightly. May God bless us greatly and humbly when we are angry, so that our pride will not make our decisions. Oh, Lord, we pray, please hold us tighter than ever, when we are angry and prideful, so that we will not decide against Your ways. Bless us to be more patient and kind, as our Lord is. May we behold Him, and humbly and patiently wait out our anger, so that in Your grace, when our fury subsides, we will once again, humbly learn to walk nearer and dearer with You, because Your ways truly is higher than ours.

### **Esth 3 (9/20/23)**

1. In 3:1-6, the Jews did not regard bowing before kings and other honored persons as a violation of the first and second commandments, so why did Mordecai refused to honor Haman (v. 4); how did Haman respond to Mordecai's refusal and why; what do you learn?
2. In 3:7-15, what did Haman planned to do with the Jews and how did he choose the day for it; which day did they make the decision to destroy and when were they to carry out their plan; if such a plan was set today against Christians, how are we to respond?

- In v. 15, the couriers went out to carry out their command, the king and Haman seemed happy, so they sat down to drink, meanwhile the people in Susa were bewildered. If anyone hated the Jews, they must have been happy. But, if they were Jews or had a Jewish friend, then they were bewildered, troubled, shocked, horrified, terrified, aghast. How would anyone make sense of a new law that will destroy, kill and annihilate a person for being a Jew? And yet, if such a new law should ever be written against Christians (and I don't think this is such a far fetched idea), how are we to think; how are we to pray; how are we to respond? How will you respond? What will you pray for?

### **Esth 4 (9/21/23)**

1. In 4, what is the copy of the text of the edict for their annihilation and how did it impact the lives of Mordecai and the Jews; how did Mordecai persuade Esther to fight for her people; what do you learn?
2. In 4, why did Esther hesitate to join the fight initially; what new mindset did she have in order to join the fight and why would she adopt this new mindset; how is this applicable to you?

- In v. 11, we learned that it's been "thirty days have passed since I (Esther) was called to go to the king." We know, "for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that they be put to death unless the king extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives." So, when Esther decided to approach the king without being summoned, it's highly probable that she will be killed. If this king had already once before deposed his precious Queen, then the second time wouldn't be as hard. That's human nature. But, in order to create a thirst and delight for his Queen, God worked the king's calendar in such a way, that he couldn't call for his Queen for thirty days. It's probably safe to say, this man loved women, as evidenced by making a search for all the beautiful young virgins to come into his presence to see if any young woman will please him

enough to become the next Queen, after Vashti. So, being away from his Queen for thirty days, when she does approach him, even though she is not summoned, his hunger for her takes over, and he is more than delighted to extend the gold scepter, as we will see in the next chapter. In order to make chapter 5 happen, God works in chapter 4 to make sure that the king will not have the company of his Queen for a whole month, only to create an irresistible hunger for her. There are no accidents; there are no lucks in God's world. He withholds for thirty days, to create an irresistible excitement. The wisdom of our God is truly beautiful.

### **Esth 5 (9/22/23)**

1. In 5:1-8, after Esther said in 4:16, "If I perish, I perish," what life risking act did she do; how did the king respond and why; what was Esther's response to the king's generous offer; what do you learn?
  2. In 5:9-14, how did Haman's mood change and why; what did his family suggest he do; if Haman's and Esther's plans worked perfectly according to this chapter's timeline, what should happen; how is this applicable to you?
- As Esther entered the king's presence, she was ready for both consequences. She knew she could lose her life that day. But, if somehow she should survive this moment, then she needed to have a banquet prepared fit for the king (v. 4). Wow, to die or to feast, the two extremes she was preparing for must have been intense. As she was preparing herself, she had no idea because she had no control which one she would be facing. But, she needed to be prepared well for either one, actually for both. Even though one wouldn't become true for her, but she had to be prepared equally well for the one that wouldn't become hers. I am challenged to learn to live for either one well, to not take for granted the other one.

### **Esth 6 (9/23/23)**

1. In 6:1-9, how do you see God's hand in this passage; what can we learn about Haman here; what do you learn?
  2. In 6:10-14, as Mordecai was receiving the king's honor, would he feel honored, why or why not; after the honor, where does Mordecai return to and why; how is Haman feeling here and why; what do you learn?
- In vv. 11-12, I am imagining Mordecai must have been the saddest looking person to ever be honored by the king. Throughout the parade, I doubt he even cracked a smile. In some sense, that's how the world's adulation should be to us. As great as it is meant to be, yet, to be exalted in the world, it does not always draw us nearer and dearer to our Lord. To see the world's greatness from heaven's eyes brings a new perspective. Let's humbly examine what thrills us, to be recognized by the world or to draw nearer to our Lord. I pray that we would love Jesus' nearness more than the world's adulation.

### **Esth 7 (9/25/23)**

1. In 7, what was the king's offer and what was Esther's request; how did the king respond to Esther's request and why (remember 3:8-15?); what do you learn?
  2. In 7, for Haman, will you describe the progression of his mood in this chapter; what did Harbona know that he didn't say before; why is Haman's end so ironic; what is the lesson you learn and how is it applicable to you?
- In v. 6, we read, "Then Haman was terrified...." Until Esther literally pointed him out, "This vile Haman," he seemed clueless. Even though, Esther used his words in v. 4, "...to be destroyed,

killed and annihilated...”, but, still, he doesn’t seem to suspect the hammer was about to strike him. Many time in our lives, it’s like that. The guilty seems to be the last to suspect. We can be the last to know. And with Haman, the very evil he planned for his enemy, returned to him, being impaled in the very pole he set up for Mordecai. “In their hearts humans plan their course; but the Lord establishes their steps” (Prov 16:9).

### **Esth 8 (9/26/23)**

1. In 8:1-6, how have the status and fortune of Haman and Mordecai changed and why; though personally safe now, why does Esther continue to plead to the king; how is this applicable to you?
  2. In 8:7-17, what was the new decree and when was it written; when is it to be implemented and why (3:13); how is the mood of the city described and why; what do you learn?
- Now that Haman was impaled and Mordecai is exalted to a high place, everything seemed right, but it wasn’t. The old law still stood, and the Jews would still be “destroyed, killed and annihilated.” Why couldn’t the old law simply be annulled, thus getting rid of the old law that they no longer wanted to keep? It was because “for no document written in the king’s name and sealed with his ring can be revoked” (also in 1:19). In other words, the only way to get rid of the old law, was to make a new law that would make the old law powerless. So, on the same day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, technically, both laws were in effect. But the old law no longer carried any weight, because the new law came with the king’s blessings. This is very similar to our spiritual laws. The old law that once ruled our hearts are still there, but it is the new law that comes with the King’s blessings and power. Surely, a few not-understanding people can still insist that the old law is in effect, and technically they would not be wrong. But, knowing that the new law came with the King’s blessing, then it would be suicidal to keep the old law because it went against the King’s new law. As we live our lives, let’s remember, the old law is still present in us, but the new law comes with the King’s power and blessings. So, may we have the discernment to know, and the grace to follow the King’s new law and remember that the old law might technically be present but it must be treated as obsolete for us. Please read and meditate with Galatians 2:20 and 2Cor 5:17.

### **Esth 9 (9/27/23)**

1. In 9:1-19, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, what happened; how many were “destroyed, killed and annihilated” and why; what do you learn?
  2. In 9:20-32, what is a Purim; how did Haman use the “pur” and what other ways are there that the Scripture teach us; what do you learn about God here and how does that impact your life?
- In v. 22, we read, “as the time when the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month when their sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into a day of celebration. He wrote them to observe the days as days of feasting and joy and giving presents of food to one another and gifts to the poor.” The certain death that would have been, became a day to experience a new life, because of a gift of mercy and grace. The most agonizing and painfully miserable day turned into a day of the most joyous celebration. To experience such an extreme turnaround, who can understand this radical joy unless one tastes this goodness? I am thinking, could we have experienced this radical turnaround, but somehow, we missed tasting the wonder that happened? May I encourage all of us, let’s pray for our God to bless us to experience and taste God’s goodness in the way He meant for us to taste and

experience. May He shape us more in His image, and not according to our imagination or desire.

### **Esth 10 (9/28/23)**

1. In 10, reflecting on Mordecai's life, how would you describe his life from when we first met him in 2:5; why was he held in high esteem; how is this applicable to you?
  2. In 10, how would you describe and compare the lives of Mordecai, Joseph and Daniel (Gen 41:43; Dan 6:3); how can you describe their walk with their God; how are you walking with your God?
- To see Mordecai rise second in rank to King Xerxes is amazing. As helpful and wise he must have been to King Xerxes and the kingdom, we are not told how. In fact, the only good work he's known for in this book, is the good work he did for God's people. This is not to say that the good work we do for this world is not unimportant. But, what really counts in God's eyes is the good work we do for His kingdom. Why? Because this world is not our true home. We belong to Another. Our home is in Heaven. We are Heavenly citizens. We are Ambassadors from Heaven sent to this world, to represent our Home in the best way possible, which is, to always reflect the beautiful character of our King. The ending to this book is short and sweet, pointing us that our work here is not for this kingdom but for God's kingdom, which means, to build His people more into the likeness of our King. May our lives and our ending also point to the beauty of our King and His kingdom to the people near and far, but most of all, to help build His people to grow more like our wonderful King.