St Matthew's Church
Elburton

Clear and Present Danger

Homegroup studies in Esther

Autumn 2026

Dear friends,

We all face different challenges, trials, and sometimes even threats. Such situations call for patience, trust, and courage.

But this isn't easy. To help us respond well with being under pressure, one thing the Lord has given us is the Book of Esther.

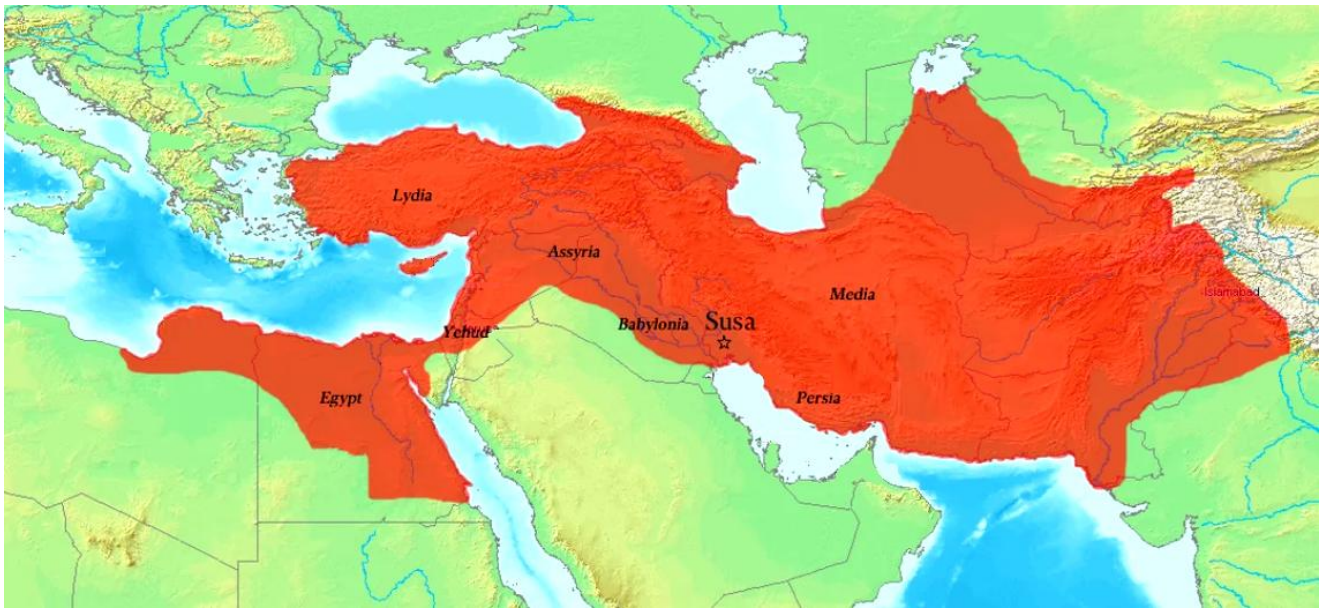
Esther lived in the days of King Ahasuerus of the Persian Empire (486- 464 BC), approximately 100 years after Israel had finally fallen, and the Kingdom of Judah had been exiled to Babylon (where Daniel and friends had lived).

Persia was the new superpower, and these days were no less challenging…

I hope this amazing story comes to life for you, and you find it inspiring and comforting.

With love & prayers,

James



The Kingdom of Persia in the days of Esther (486 - 464 BC)

Weekly Plan – Autumn 2026

2 Sept[+]	Prayer Meeting (7:15 for 7:30pm)
9 Sept*	Study One: *Open Doors* (Esther 1-2)
23 Sept	Study Two: *Bad News* (Esther 3)
7 Oct	Prayer Meeting (7:15 for 7:30pm)
14 Oct	Study Three: *Speaking Up* (Esther 4-5)
28 Oct	Study Four: *Just Desserts* (Esther 6-7)
4 Nov	Prayer Meeting (7:15 for 7:30pm)
11 Nov	Study Five: *New Outfits* (Esther 8)
25 Nov	Study Six: *Purfect Justice* (Esther 9-10)
2 Dec	Prayer Meeting (7:15 for 7:30pm)
Mid-December	Christmas Socials

[+] '*You do not have because you do not ask…'* (James 4:2)

* All dates approximate, depending on your group

Study One: *Open Doors* Esther 1-2

Intro Q. This study is about opportunities.
What opportunities have you had recently?

These studies are quite long, so it might be best to read some in sections.
Read Esther 1:1-9

Q1. Where are we in the big picture of the Bible when the book of Esther begins? (see 2:5-6). How might God's people be feeling?

Q2. What picture is painted in these verses of King Ahasuerus?
[A-haz-a-rus (think hazardous!)]

(note re: v.8 – a common practice in feasts was for drinking to only take place when the king was drinking)

Read Esther 1:10-22

Q3. In these verses, the king becomes merry, then enraged, then pleased. Why?

Read Esther 2

Q4. What happens to Esther in these verses and why?

Q5. Look on to 2:19-23. What information is and isn't shared?

Q6. What open doors are you praying for, for yourself or others at the moment?

Q7. What can you remember when doors don't open? (See Romans 8:28)

Conclude with a time of prayer

Study Two: *Bad News* Esther 3

Intro Q. This study is about bad news.
Has anything happened recently that's less than wonderful?

Read Esther 3

Q1. How wonderful would you say this chapter is?

Q2. What does Mordecai refuse to do, and what are the consequences?

Q3. Look at verses 7-15. What is written in this edict, and how does it come to be written?

(note re: v.11 = 'use as much of the money as you need')

Q4. *Reflect:* Do you think faithful Christians are more or less likely to be popular than other people? Share your thinking.

Read 1 Peter 2:18-23

Q5. What did Jesus do when everyone and everything turned against him?

Conclude with a time of prayer

Study Three: *Speaking Up* Esther 4-5

Intro Q. This study is about opportunities.
What issues or concerns have you spoken up about?

Read Esther 4

Q1. Look at the first four verses of chapter 4.
How upset are Mordecai and his fellow Jews and why?

Q2. Look on to verses 5-11. What message does Mordecai share with Esther and how does Esther respond?

Q3. Look on to verses 12-17. What further words pass between Mordecai and Esther?

Read Esther 5

Q4. Look at the first eight verses of chapter 5.
How does the king respond to being disturbed?

Q5. What do you make of Haman and his wife?

Read Hebrews 7:23-25

Q6. How is Esther a picture of the Lord Jesus?

Q7. Would you consider fasting over something? If so, what?

Q8. Who could you take it upon yourself to pray for?

Conclude with a time of prayer

Study Four: *Just Desserts* Esther 6-7

Intro Q. This reading ends after dessert has been served…
What do you like to do after dinner?

Read Esther 6:1-13

Q1. Did you find anything humorous in these verses?

Q2. How is Mordecai's family chat in verses 12-13 different to the one described in the previous chapter?

Read Esther 6:14 – 7:10

Q3. What happens in these verses?

Q4. How swiftly does the king's justice come?

Read Revelation 20:7-10

Q5. At the moment, the devil is causing much sorrow for Christian believers all across the earth. What will happen to him one day?

Q6. A common way to picture God is as a soft and cuddly bearded old man. How do verses such as these in Revelation challenge such an idea? (see also Hebrews 12:28-29)

Conclude with a time of prayer

Study Five: *New Outfits* Esther 8

Intro Q. In today's reading we see Mordecai in a new outfit.
What item of clothing did you last buy?

Read Esther 8

Q1. Look at verses 1-2. Who can remind us what's just happened in the previous chapter?

Q2. Does this mean that everything is now sorted? Look on to verses 3-8.

Q3. How many times does the word 'king' appear in verses 1-8?
What significance does this give to these events?

Q4. Look on to verses 9-14. What is emphasised in these verses, and how might this be significant?

Q5. Look on to verses 15-17. What do you make of Mordecai's new look?
How does it compare with what he was wearing in 4:1-4?

Read Isaiah 61:10 and Revelation 21:2

Q6. How good will we look when we're in heaven?
How do you feel about this prospect?

Conclude with a time of prayer

"You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy." (John 16:20)

Study Six: *Purfect Justice* Esther 9-10

Intro Q. In chapter 9 verse 1, we see the word 'reverse.'
What things can you think of that have a reverse setting?

Read Esther 9-10.

Q1. Look first at verses 1-19. What happens on the day that was planned for the destruction of God's people?

Q2. What phrase is repeated in verses 10, 15 and 16?
What point is the author making?

Q3. Look at verses 17-19. The events of this chapter are difficult, but try to put yourself in the shoes of these Jews: how could the death of so many people be a reason to celebrate?

Q4. Look on to verses 20-32. What's called for in this section?

Q5. Look on to chapter 10. How is Mordecai a picture of Jesus?

Read 1 Peter 5:6-11

Q6. What's something that's stood out to you from the book of Esther that could help you do what's asked for in these verses?

Conclude with a time of prayer

Bonus Questions for Reflection

1. Should we expect God to deliver his people when they are threatened? What are good things to pray for in such situations?

2. How desirable is it for Christians to aspire to high political office, locally or nationally? What are the dangers and opportunities?

3. Consider the causes and consequences of Haman's actions? How can we resist such vices?

4. What is a Christian response to acts of aggression?

5. How could we be more enthusiastic about praying for our nation's leaders?

Taken, and adapted, from P. Southwell's Ezra – Job,
Scripture Union Bible Study Commentary, 1982

Susa under King Ahasuerus, c. 484-464B.C. (artistic impression)