

Matt 11:20-24 (NIV)

- ²⁰ Then Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. ²¹ “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²² But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. ²³ And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades. For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. ²⁴ But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”

Christmas- A miracle we all have to choose what to do with. It is full of Corporate Culture

- **I Peter 2: 4-17 NIV, I Peter 2:9 KJV**
- **4** As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— **5** you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. **6** For in Scripture it says:
 - “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”
 - **7** Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”
 - **8** and, “A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.”
 - They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.
 - **9** **But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.**

What does it mean to be a peculiar people?

- **Vs9 in KJV** But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a **peculiar people**; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;
- **Peculiar-** mid-15c., "belonging exclusively to one person," from Latin *peculiaris* "of one's own (property)," from *peculium* "private property," literally "property in cattle" (in ancient times the most important form of property), from *pecu* "cattle, flock," source: <http://www.etymonline.com>
- *Peter addresses this issue of how it looks to be peculiar in the next verses.*
- **I Peter 2:11- 17 NIV**
- ¹¹ Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. ¹² **Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.**
- ¹³ Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, ¹⁴ or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. ¹⁵ **For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people.** ¹⁶ Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. ¹⁷ **Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.**

How do we honor the emperor without losing our faith?

- I will get more into this later, but we need to have a response for those around us who are waiting to criticize us for our faith.
- Instead of running away from political issues, we need to do the Word.
- Example- President Obama's stand for Gay athletes at the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi. Where do you stand on such laws... Hey they were in the old testament, but so were heterosexual laws against adultery, and the practice of polygamy and slavery. Let's not even talk about pork chops.... Where do we stand as a body? This is clear, we are not under that law anymore. The woman caught in adultery could not have been killed legally anyway! The Jews were not allowed to execute people. They had to get Roman permission.
- We are in the world, but not of the World...
- This crosses both sides of the Aisle. President Regan used a woman who had 15 aliases, was getting social security checks from dead veterans, etc. as a reason to dismantle the welfare system. That woman was wanted in a possible murder and kidnapping too, but partly because of big deal made of the welfare situation they could only charge her for those things.
- As a Christian people we have stood up against, slavery, and other major injustices, and have sometimes focused on things that were not so big... Like prohibition (of alcohol). It is hard to legislate morality, what God is calling us to do is stand for Justice and for those who cannot stand for themselves, in a way that honors those we speak to so they might be won over.

Proverbs 3:1-12 (NIV)

3 My son, do not forget my teaching,
but keep my commands in your heart,
2 for they will prolong your life many years
and bring you peace and prosperity.
3 Let love and faithfulness never leave you;
bind them around your neck,
write them on the tablet of your heart.
4 Then you will win favor and a good name
in the sight of God and man.
5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
6 in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.^[a]

7 Do not be wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD and shun evil.
8 This will bring health to your body
and nourishment to your bones.
9 Honor the LORD with your wealth,
with the firstfruits of all your crops;
10 then your barns will be filled to overflowing,
and your vats will brim over with new wine.
11 My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline,
and do not resent his rebuke,
12 because the LORD disciplines those he loves,
as a father the son he delights in.

John 9:13-41 (NIV)

- **13** They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. **14** Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. **15** Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see."
- **16** Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath."
- But others asked, "How can a sinner perform such signs?" So they were divided.
- **17** Then they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened."
- The man replied, "He is a prophet."
- **18** They still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. **19** "Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?"
- **20** "We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. **21** But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself." **22** His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. **23** That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."
- **24** A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God by telling the truth," they said. "We know this man is a sinner."
- **25** He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"

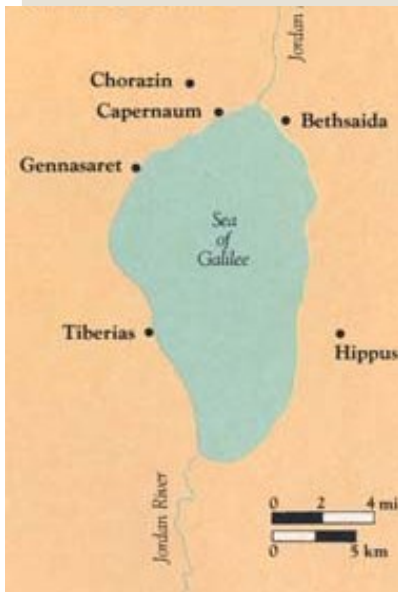
John 9 Continued

- ²⁶ Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"
- ²⁷ He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?"
- ²⁸ Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! ²⁹ We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."
- ³⁰ The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. ³² Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."
- ³⁴ To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.
- **Spiritual Blindness**
- ³⁵ Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"
- ³⁶ "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him."
- ³⁷ Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you."
- ³⁸ Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.
- ³⁹ Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind."
- ⁴⁰ Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?"
- ⁴¹ Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains."

*Israel the Country of today is
about the same size at
Massachusetts*

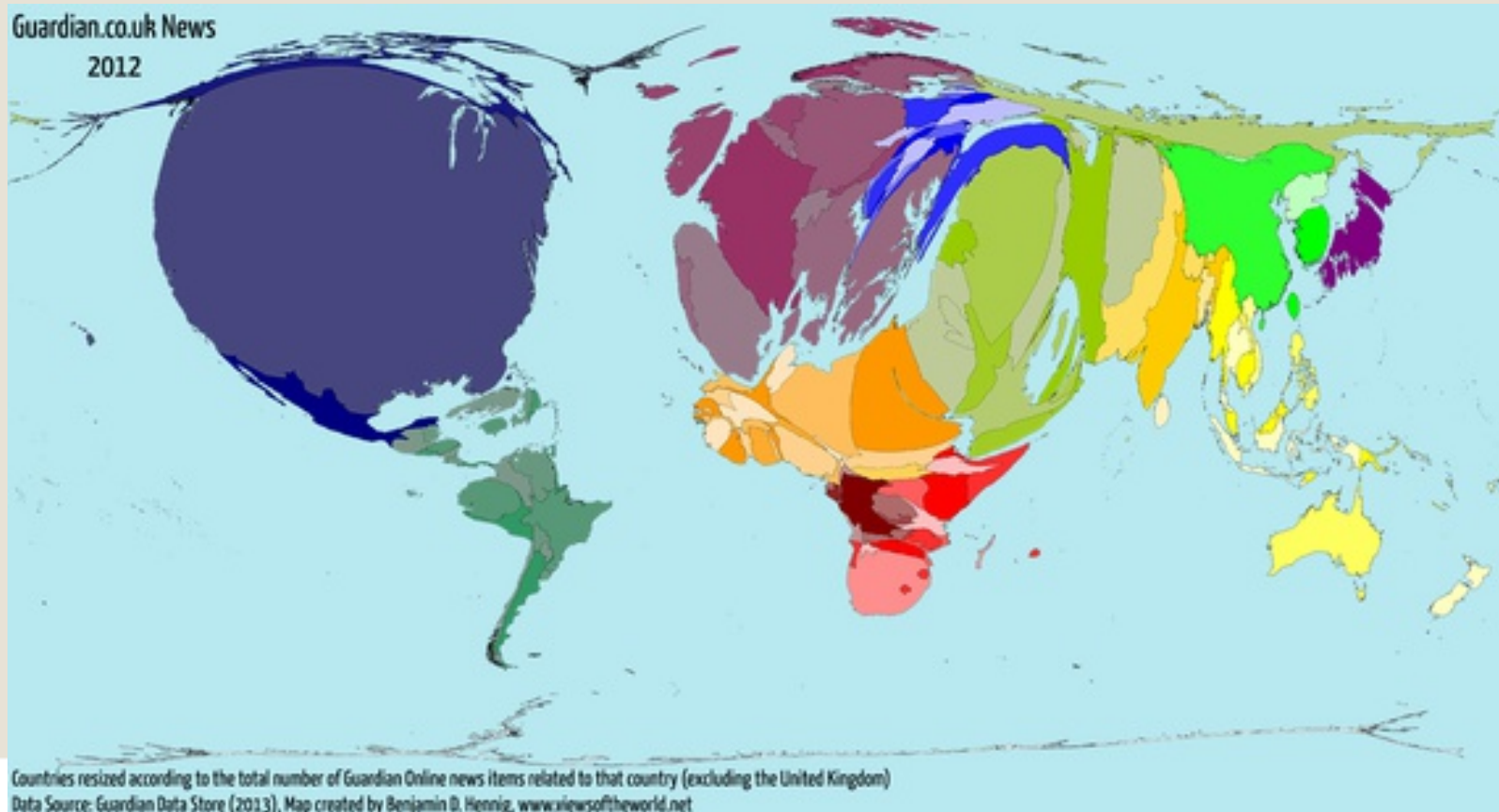
TRUE or FALSE?

The 3 sisters... and 2 Cousins



It's all about Me!

- Here is how news is delivered in the west- how the map would look if was based on UK news coverage. This is who and how the West looks to itself. But note, a country like Israel (about the size of Massachusetts) gets more coverage than South America, Germany, Spain, Australia and about the same as China with a billion people. If we made a map of where we put our free time and energy, what would it look like, and where would God be?



Components of Corporate Character

Negative

- **Having and accepting Poor**

Priorities: Our Priorities must be set by God, but if we are not careful we will either have our own agendas, or let the agendas of others or institutions create them for us. Matt 11:20-24

Positive

Creating Healthy Priorities: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together Heb 10:25, Speaking to each other in spiritual songs,

Components of Corporate Character

Negative:

- Carnality: Being Lukewarm like the Laodicean church of Rev 3:14-22. Being like the world, and mixing our Walk and practices with world. These three towns were still Jewish towns, but in the time of the Roman occupation, there were many gentiles in the region and it was known to have many gentiles, one reason many gentiles came to Jesus during this time, but he was sent to the house of Abraham. Some archeological research suggests that in the synagogues of this region, there were often sculptures of Medusa on the walls. Things of the world sneak in, and Miracles don't overcome them.

Positive:

Turning to God via healthy interdependent discipleship- seeing what to do , not just majoring in the don'ts. Being Like Rahab or Ruth or Daniel. Free from guilt and shame but sold out for God

Components of Corporate Character

◦ Negative

- **Spiritual Blindness:** Not knowing one is blind: Loosing one's senses- deafness & blindness to Spiritual things, causing misattribution. John 9:35-41. This is troublesome because one can't tell they are blind. This is why God can make the wise seem foolish, they don't know they are foolish in their pride. This often leads to lack of appreciation of what is right in front of your face- Like gifts and miracles. Instead of praising God for the gifts and singing songs for the miracles, you filter them around traditions, fitting in, other self centeredness etc. rather than truly seeking God. There is a great curse on the wise and the gifted if they seek their own way- Hell is a Place for the creature(s) who were the most gifted and should know better to be punished

Positive:

Getting regular spiritual check ups with People we trust, and then getting the Spiritual Glasses, Lasik etc. needed to see clearly: Not knowing one is blind: praising God for the gifts and singing songs for the miracles. We sometimes think negatively of discipline here, but we need to discipline those we love to help them come to their senses quickly.

The connection between Individual and Corporate Character:

- ¹⁵ Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world, **the lust of the flesh** and **the lust of the eyes** (Comfort- getting what we want (or see around us) to make us “happy”) and **the boastful pride of life**, (and pride in our achievements and possessions (New Living Trans) is not from the Father, but is from the world. ¹⁷ The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.
- Scripture 1 John 5:17
- Agenda, Comfort, Selfishness

How the Battle of Character plays out

Battle ground	As Individual	Local Church National/World Church	An example: Samson
Out –Agenda (Whose), <u>World- Dangerous Environment</u>	- The lust of the flesh/ world- our agenda, or if we don't have one the Culture's agenda will fill the void. Our flesh is the environment we make decisions	Carnality of Thought- the Belief that it is ok for the Church to look like the world.	Samson Represented God's people- gifted, but distracted by the world. He wanted "other" women. Hebrew women weren't good enough.
In- Comfort (Whose) <u>Flesh- Internal Enemy</u>	Personal Selfishness, greed, covetousness- the Lust of the eyes.	Phariseeism- The belief that is Ok to focus on what our personal views of righteousness are. Priority on the wrong things. Sin vs. redemption for example	Samson was pretty much beyond correction. He was given over to his flesh so he was blind to what was important. His priority should have been killing Philistines instead he was dating them.
Up/Down- Focus <u>Satan- External Enemy</u> (Selfishness to the extreme)	Pride of Life- Satan's biggest sin. Pride/ focus in/on our achievements and possessions. Being given over to Satan, allows this pride to go to the extreme and it steals, kills and destroys us.	Satan- Who hinders God's kingdom in us, unless we resist. He attacks the Church's agenda and unity around it (Galatians), Economy, and health.	Pride did him in, and Satan attacked him where he was weak- through women. God had to reach him by making him blind- like he did with Paul. That reboot is sometimes essential for winning our battles. Selfishness and Pride were stripped and God used a defeat to make the selfish, selfless.

A Case Study of Individual/ Corporate Character : Homosexual Marriage

Battle Front	Poor/ Evil/ Defeated Individual Responses	Poor/ Evil/ Defeated Body Responses	Healthy Body Responses
World (Carnal agenda)	“Everybody’s doing it” They seem to be happy on modern Family, and I love that show, did you see when..., and did you see Scandal last night..,	It is more than OK, it is God’s plan because He is love. We should be welcoming and affirming of everyone.	God’s Agenda: Sin separates, God accepts as one is but on His terms, and then helps to become like him. They don’t need to get rid of sin but accept Jesus who will help with sin.
Flesh (Individual/ Pharisaical comfort)	“Homosexuals are Ok with <u>me</u> so it is fine, it is not worth a battle and I will be uncomfortable dealing with it” Another fleshy view- though Opposite “I hate Queers, God will destroy them in Hell!” This is just as wrong if not moreso!	Let’s make it a higher than it needs to be priority and denounce it because deep down <u>we</u> just don’t like LGBT community- they are a threat to <u>our</u> way of life and political agendas.	We need to stand against the haters, and against those who think their terms are God’s terms. We must defend the widow, orphan and stranger in our midst. That was the sin of Sodom more than anything...
Satan (Selfishness)	This goes against God’s plan, so let’s promote it, and give it to individual Pharisees types to focus on it in the culture instead of discipleship of the body and sharing the Gospel with the world.	Let’s distract the church from it’s call to make disciples, weaken their interpretation of the Word and divide them so they tear each other apart.	We need to put first things first and disciple, take care of our culture and stand as a difference to the World’s culture. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

What did Jesus Give us for Culture Building- Glasses to avoid Spiritual Blindness

1. His life and Words as teaching and example. The Glasses we need to avoid blindness. Teenager know it all blindness. Avoiding Complaining by meditating on Him and on the positive.
2. His challenge to make disciples- Maturity in the Lord.
3. His routines- Baptism and Communion
4. His Spirit- To comfort, guide, convict, humble, encourage.
5. His Body- The church body to guide worship, support during suffering (unlike Job's Friends) and service. Other churches also serve as examples and warnings. Rev. 2-4. The Church of Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea for example.

What did Jesus Give us for Culture Building-Glasses to avoid Spiritual Blindness (Cont.)

6. His Priorities- The greatest commandment, to be the greatest you must serve, Being Authentic, seeking spiritual glasses, and people to share our real self with- Avoiding the “Jane” mask. Other examples...Word of Faith issue...

7. His Sufferings and challenges to persevere, avoiding the complaining. Show me your faith/Character without works, and I will show you my faith by my works. Rahab as an example. Persistence in the face of challenge is part of Character... God allowed some churches to struggle- Why? Because that is how we overcome. Being Lukewarm can come from not appreciating the Lord, or not appreciating Miracles like the Churches Jesus condemned.

America's Spoiled, Rich Culture as an example: We are not happy while we have almost everything we want! While others can be happy in poverty. We don't suffer like most of the World, but are impatient, negative, etc, and this impacts our church. To Quote

Discussion Questions (1st part of Sermon)

1. Why do you think God judges those who should know better more harshly? Can you think of times when you have done this?
2. We often think of repenting as turning away from sin, rather than turning away from independence and self centeredness. The Pharisees didn't see much sin to turn away from, but were focused on their agenda so much so they couldn't see that their agenda was not God's. Can you think of a time when you may have done this or been hurt by such a mindset.
3. Thanksgiving is a corporate event, where we give thanks as a family. What is the power of corporate thanks, prayer, worship? How can we create a culture where this is more common in a culture that is so individualistic?

Questions Continued

- 4. The opposite of love is not really hate, but self love and centeredness. Since God is love, it is crucial to worship God and appreciate those around us in order to create a healthy community. What are some things that can distract us as individuals and as churches from focusing on free and true worship?

Questions and Answers

- I am going to ask some groups questions to see how they do so we can have fun as a family...



FAMILY BIBLE QUIZ SHOW

Family up in practice- Break up into Groups and we will have a friendly little game. 3rd youngest in group should be captain and each group has 30 seconds to answer.



*Chorazin, Capernaum, and
Bethsaida Were Predominantly
Jewish Cities*

TRUE or FALSE?

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Jewish Cities*

TRUE or FALSE?

Moses took 2 of each animal on the ark.

TRUE or FALSE?

Moses built a small ark, but Noah had the animals come on the ark (boat).

Jesus heals a paraplegic at the
Bethesda Pool

TRUE or FALSE?

(John 5:2-9)

Noah and his family were on the ark for 40 days.

TRUE or FALSE?

They were on the ark for at least 150 days or so, maybe over a year. It rained for 40 days.

Methuselah was 1000 years old when he died.

TRUE or FALSE?

Methuselah was 969 years old when he died- the same year as the flood.

Isaac means sadness

TRUE or FALSE?

Isaac means Laughter

Abram cut a deal with God by cutting animals in half so he and God could walk through the bloody mess.

TRUE or FALSE?

This is how nations made treaties, saying if I break this treaty may this happen to me. God didn't let Abraham walk through the animals but instead a torch and firepot go through the animals. Jesus fulfills this covenant by saying this is my body- Broken for you!

Name one non Jewish City God spares after they repent despite the prophet sent was reluctant to go.

Ninevah, the capital of Assyria.

*The Northern Kingdom of Israel was
Captured by the People who repented
after Jonah preached to them- the
Assyrians*

TRUE or FALSE?

How many righteous people would be needed for God to spare Sodom from destruction?

10.

Abraham pleaded for the town and got the number down to 10 from 100.

Abraham fathered many Children (Physically), of those Children we have names of 3 of the mothers, how many children do those mothers have ?

8.

1 from Hagar the Egyptian, (Ishmael)

1 from his wife Sarah (Isaac)

6 more from his 2nd wife Keturah he marries after Sarah dies.

What was the last plague called?

The Passover.

This plague was interdependent. Egyptians were welcome to join, they would just have to believe God (not hard after 9 miracles), and humble themselves to eat with slaves, and any Hebrew not participating would lose their first born.

The trip from Egypt to the promised land could have taken 11 days instead it took _____ years?

40.

God led the people out of Egypt by a pillar of _____ by day and a pillar of _____ by night?

Pillar of Cloud and Fire

Achan would have seen this daily. Rahab would have probably only heard about it.

What is another name for the portable temple they used in the wilderness?

Tabernacle

*There were rules and details in place to make sure the ark of the covenant was dealt with on God's terms.
Interdependence requires healthy terms, and moving together.*

Speed Round- Moses

- A. The Ark of the covenant contained what 3 things?
- B. How old was Moses when he died?
- C. Who fought over Moses body?
- D. Moses spoke to what burning object?
- E. Moses Father in law was named:

Speed Round- Judges

- A. Who was the first judge?
- B. Who was the female judge?
- C. Who was the last Judge?
- D. Who was the first King of Israel?
- E. Which king killed Goliath with one of his 5 smooth stones?

Match the place with the name:

Samaria

Ruled by Nebuchadnezzar

Bethlehem

Jonah Preached there

Ninevah

Capital of Israel

Hebron

Where David was born

Babylon

Original Capital of Judah

Match the person with the name:

Nehemiah

Said Elijah would come again

John the Baptist

Means the same as Joshua

Jesus

Rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem

Herod

Had same diet as Elijah

Malachi

Built the 2nd temple