

FEBRUARY 13, 2026 FATHER MICHAEL COUTTS

For this, our first reading is a simple story of the prophet Ahijah and Jeroboam.

Ahijah was not a major prophet or a minor prophet. You do not have a book of Ahijah in the Scriptures. And Jeroboam was the chief executive officer in charge of the slaves, the indentured laborers. These slaves were taken from the tribe of Judah in the southern kingdom.

So it is a simple story, but actually it is more a Deuteronomic history. The Jewish author and scholar Israel Finkelstein tells us that the stories of David and Solomon were written three hundred years later, during the kingship of King Josiah, the good King Josiah.

They were writing these stories three hundred years after the events. David was really a petty chieftain of a tribe, and Solomon was even a minor chieftain. So why do they embellish the story to such a great extent?

Saul had thousands of soldiers and victories, but David had ten thousand. There were probably not even ten thousand people at that time, Israel Finkelstein tells us. But they had to do this in order to show that their God was the strongest and the most powerful—a God above all other gods.

And so they would give Solomon seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines just to show that he had made alliances with seven hundred little chieftains around the place. Every time he made an alliance, the daughter of the chief was given as a wife.

Now, if you had a royal wedding for every one of those wives, it would have taken a week at least for each wedding. He would have needed to

get married to fifty wives every year, and it would have taken him fourteen long years. So obviously, it is an exaggeration to show the greatness of God.

Solomon had come to the end of his tenure. He had seen a young man called Jeroboam who was very efficient and managed his household so well, so he put him in charge. Little knowing that Jeroboam would gain a lot of prestige taking care of the slaves.

After all, Jeroboam himself was from the tribe of Judah, and the slaves were his fellow countrymen, so he knew how to deal with them. And Solomon, like Saul and David, got jealous and tried to kill Jeroboam, who fled to Egypt.

And when Solomon died, Jeroboam returned. And that is the background to our story today.

The prophet Ahijah goes to Jeroboam and says, “Take ten of the tribes, the northern tribes of Israel, and you will be the king. But we will keep one tribe in Jerusalem and Judah in honor of King David, and the reign of David will last forever.”

Well, the reign of David—David united the northern and southern kingdoms—and within a generation, it seemed that the promise of God, that your kingdom would last forever, was already falling to pieces. There was a divided kingdom. They were fighting one another.

And that very last line of our first reading today, “Israel rebelled against the house of David,” is pretty much the story of what our reading is about.

So what happens? Is the promise of God really going to fall apart? Does the promise of God not hold any water at all?

And the truth is that God does not deal in one generation or two generations. God deals in terms of millennia, in terms of thousands of years.

And we come all the way down to the story of the Annunciation. The angel Gabriel tells Mary, “The throne of his father David will be restored to him.”

God’s promise will be kept, and the promise will be continued in the person of Jesus Christ. He will not only be a descendant of David, but he will also have the throne of David.

Not a throne that we see today with tiaras and outriders and soldiers, but a throne that will be humble. And later we find that God says, “I am going to take a people to myself. I will make a humble people. They will obey the Lord. This remnant will keep the Torah and follow the traditions.”

This is our story of this great king, King Solomon, who in reality was an ordinary tribal chieftain.

As we come to the Gospel, we find that Jesus, who carries on the kingdom of David, now shows that he is the Messiah and carries on as king in this world, according to what Isaiah said: “The Spirit of the Lord will come down upon him, and he will bring freedom to captives. He will make the blind see, the deaf hear, and the lame leap like the deer.”

And we have that in our Gospel today. Whenever Jesus does a healing, he always asks, “Do you believe that this can be possible?” And when they say, “I do believe,” by the word of the mouth of Jesus, the person is healed.

But there are two instances in the Gospel where Jesus does something very physical. In John, chapter nine, he heals the blind man by taking

saliva and making mud, putting it on his eyes, and saying, “Go and wash in the pool of Siloam.”

Here, he spits and touches the tongue of this man. A very sensual, a very tactile healing indeed.

The people of Israel must have remembered Genesis, chapter two, when God took mud, formed it into a human being, and breathed into it. God is taking the very mud that Jesus now takes and puts on the eyes of the blind man and touches the tongue of the man who was mute and deaf.

Jesus is re-enacting the story of creation once again, so that you and I may have eyes to see, ears to hear, and be open to the word of God.

Ahijah spoke to Jeroboam as a prophet. The kings and the priests were a corrupt group of people. God would not choose a king or a priest to bring the people back; he chose somebody from outside, the prophet Ahijah.

And so also today, God chooses somebody from outside. Jesus Christ, who was neither prophet nor king, but in reality was both of them, because he was the Son of God.

And here he is, coming to set us free, and to ask us to praise God and give glory, just like David and Solomon, and the Deuteronomic history of the people of Israel.

God bless you all.