***Jeremiah 22:1-14 Thus says the Lord: “Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and there speak this word, 2and say, ‘Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah, you who sit on the throne of David, you and your servants and your people who enter these gates! 3Thus says the Lord: “Execute judgment and righteousness, and deliver the plundered out of the hand of the oppressor. Do no wrong and do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, or the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place. 4For if you indeed do this thing, then shall enter the gates of this house, riding on horses and in chariots, accompanied by servants and people, kings who sit on the throne of David. 5But if you will not hear these words, I swear by Myself,” says the Lord, “that this house shall become a desolation.” ’ ”6For thus says the Lord to the house of the king of Judah: “You are Gilead to Me, The head of Lebanon;  
Yet I surely will make you a wilderness, Cities which are not inhabited. 7I will prepare destroyers against you, Everyone with his weapons; They shall cut down your choice cedars  
And cast them into the fire. 8And many nations will pass by this city; and everyone will say to his neighbor, ‘Why has the Lord done so to this great city?’ 9Then they will answer, ‘Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God, and worshiped other gods and served them.’ ” 10Weep not for the dead, nor bemoan him; Weep bitterly for him who goes away,  
For he shall return no more, Nor see his native country. 11For thus says the Lord concerning Shallum the son of Josiah, king of Judah, who reigned instead of Josiah his father, who went from this place: “He shall not return here anymore, 12but he shall die in the place where they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more. 13“Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness And his chambers by injustice, Who uses his neighbor’s service without wages And gives him nothing for his work, 14Who says, ‘I will build myself a wide house with spacious chambers, And cut out windows for it, Paneling it with cedar And painting it with vermilion.***

We’re with Jeremiah tonight, as God gives him a prophecy directed at Jehoiakim. Josiah has been killed in a war with the Egyptians. Jehoahaz has been taken captive to Egypt. Jehoiakim has been installed as a puppet king by the Pharoah. He feels very safe, as he is protected by the Egyptian king. As a result, he is an evil and despicable king, oppressing the people and bringing further misery, with idolatry, to the people of Judah. God is preparing Babylon as His tool of judgement. Jeremiah brings this prophecy as a warning that judgement in imminent. Yet, we know the people will choose not to hear.

Verse 1-2 *Thus says the Lord: “Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and there speak this word, 2and say, ‘Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah, you who sit on the throne of David, you and your servants and your people who enter these gates!*God now speaks a prophecy to Jeremiah. Theologians agree that this will be delivered during the reign of Jehoiakim to Jehoiakim, before his death. Jeremiah is to go down to the kings house and say – hear the word of the Lord. He is to speak this to Jehoiakim. We know that Jehoiakim was placed on the throne by the king of Egypt to take the spot of Jehoahaz. We know he was king from 610 BC to 599 BC. Jeremiah reminds the king of God’s promise that a descendant of David would be on the throne if they live in obedience. Jeremiah also includes in this prophecy the servants, officers, and all the people of the city. In other words, everyone is to hear God’s prophecy through Jeremiah.

Verses 3-5 *Thus says the Lord: “Execute judgment and righteousness, and deliver the plundered out of the hand of the oppressor. Do no wrong and do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, or the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place. 4For if you indeed do this thing, then shall enter the gates of this house, riding on horses and in chariots, accompanied by servants and people, kings who sit on the throne of David. 5But if you will not hear these words, I swear by Myself,” says the Lord, “that this house shall become a desolation****.*** Now, we hear the word of the Lord – administer justice properly. Administer justice to the weak and vulnerable, as well as the strong and powerful. Eliminate tyranny, oppression, and injustice. Do no wrong! Do no violence! If you, Jehoiakim, rule justly, in reality and not just as a show, causing all that rule on your behalf to do the same, Jerusalem and all of Judah will prosper and many kings of the lineage of David will sit on the throne. If the people are obedient, there will be kings uninterrupted. There will be peace and tranquility. BUT… If you will not hear these words, God swears by Himself, God resolves and will not revoke His pronouncement. His judgement will not change and cannot be changed by anyone. No one will reverse His word. The house of David will become a desolation.

Verses 6-9 *For thus says the Lord to the house of the king of Judah: “You are Gilead to Me, The head of Lebanon; Yet I surely will make you a wilderness, Cities which are not inhabited. 7I will prepare destroyers against you, Everyone with his weapons; They shall cut down your choice cedars And cast them into the fire. 8And many nations will pass by this city; and everyone will say to his neighbor, ‘Why has the Lord done so to this great city?’ 9Then they will answer, ‘Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God, and worshiped other gods and served them.*God now continues – thus saith the Lord to the house of the king. Thou art Gilead, meaning that the land of Judah is precious in God’s sight, filled with abundance and blessings, yet surely God will make this a wilderness and desolation, because of the sin of the people. Lebanon represented the highest mountain in Israel. Gilead was the richest and most fertile region of Israel. By God’s providence, what He raised up to the heights and riches, He will bring low. God will prepare and send destroyers against Judah. The destroyers will cut down the choice cedars, representing riches and the kings house, which is made of cedar. The Chaldeans will sack the country and remove the choice riches. Many nations will pass by, while traveling or trading, and say why has God done so to this city? They knew Judah to be strong and prosperous. It has been known as the City of God. They are astonished to see the ruin and desolation. Of course, we know that Moses said in Deuteronomy that the nations would be astonished at the destruction if Israel strayed into disobedience. But many have the ready answer on their lips! Because they have forsaken the covenant of Jehovah their God; have turned from their relationship with him. They have followed false gods. They have shown God great contempt.

Verse 10 *Weep not for the dead, nor bemoan him; Weep bitterly for him who goes away,  
For he shall return no more, Nor see his native country.* King Josiah died in the battle with the Egyptians, which led to Jehoiakim being on the throne. Weep not for Josiah, that he is dead. Weep instead for Jehoahaz who was carried away into captivity and was never able to return. Jehoahaz here is called Shallum. They are one in the same. Name changes were not uncommon when assuming the throne.

Verses 11-12 *For thus says the Lord concerning Shallum the son of Josiah, king of Judah, who reigned instead of Josiah his father, who went from this place: “He shall not return here anymore, 12but he shall die in the place where they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more.* As stated a moment ago, Jehoahaz is Shallum. Shallum means retribution, while Jehoahaz means God sustains. Shallum’s reign was a time of great disaster, though it was short. Jehoahaz was taken to Egypt in captivity and not mentioned again.

Verses 13-14 *“Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness And his chambers by injustice, Who uses his neighbor’s service without wages And gives him nothing for his work, 14Who says, ‘I will build myself a wide house with spacious chambers, And cut out windows for it, Paneling it with cedar And painting it with vermilion.*Jeremiah now denounces the house that Jehoiakim built through dishonesty. History tells us that he built a stately and luxurious home, while the city was suffering. He failed to pay the wages of the workmen building his house. He was a dishonest king and his rule was a great calamity. He oppressed the people while he lived the high life. God heard the cries the oppressed. The king said, “I will build a house that has cool air flowing through. This was a sign of the wealthy. Vermilion, a color red made popular by the Egyptians, and cedar were signs of wealth as well. It may be a sign of wealth, but it is not protection from God’s wrath. Jehoiakim ruled for 11 years and his rule was scarred by idolatry and greed. Ewald, in his book, “History of Israel”, wrote: Jehoiakim had a passion for building splendid and costly houses; and as he esteemed his own position secure under the protection of a superior power (Egypt), he did not scruple to oppress his helpless subjects, and wring from them as much money as possible”.

So we leave Jeremiah tonight. The Babylonians will remove Jehoiakim as the king of Judah in 598 BC. God will bring judgement, but make no mistake – Judah brought itself to ruin, as the nations and people passing by say. They have turned their back on God. We must understand this lesson and pray that the USA turns back to God from our covetous, wicked, ruinous ways. It is not God, but we that are ruining this nation. Only repentance and turning our eyes to Jesus can bring us back.