

**CURRENT TEACHING SERIES**

# **EPIC TALES**

A dramatic scene featuring a whale's tail fluke rising from the churning blue ocean under a dark, stormy sky with rain falling. The whale's tail is dark and glistening with water, creating a sense of power and movement. The overall atmosphere is intense and cinematic.

**RELEARNING THE ANCIENT BIBLE  
STORIES IN A BRAND-NEW WAY**

# Narrative vs. Theological Implications

- In the Bible, we read about God, His character and His work
- Then we must ask what these events and actions tell us about God and His eternal purpose
- Then we must live in light of the revealed character and nature of God

**EPIC TALES**



# Book of Jonah

**EPIC TALES**



# Who was Jonah?

- Jonah, whose name means "dove," was from Gath Hopher (2 Kings 14:25), a town in the tribe of Zebulun (Joshua 19:10, 13). Jonah lived when Jeroboam II of the Northern Kingdom was king (2 Kings 14:23-25). His prediction that Israel's boundaries (2 Kings 14:25) would extend under Jeroboam came true.
- This prophet, a Hebrew (Jonah 1:9) and the son of Amittai (Jonah 1:1; Amittai means "[my] true one"), was the only Old Testament prophet to attempt to run from God.
- Jonah was one of four Old Testament prophets whose ministries were referred to by Jesus (Matthew 12:41; Luke 11:32). The others were Elijah (Matthew 17:11-12), Elisha (Luke 4:27), and Isaiah (Matthew 15:7).
- Since 2 Kings 14:25 relates Jonah to the reign of Jeroboam II, the events in the Book of Jonah took place some time in Jeroboam's reign (793-753 BC). He was a contemporary of both Hosea and Amos.

*Source: The Bible Knowledge Commentary*

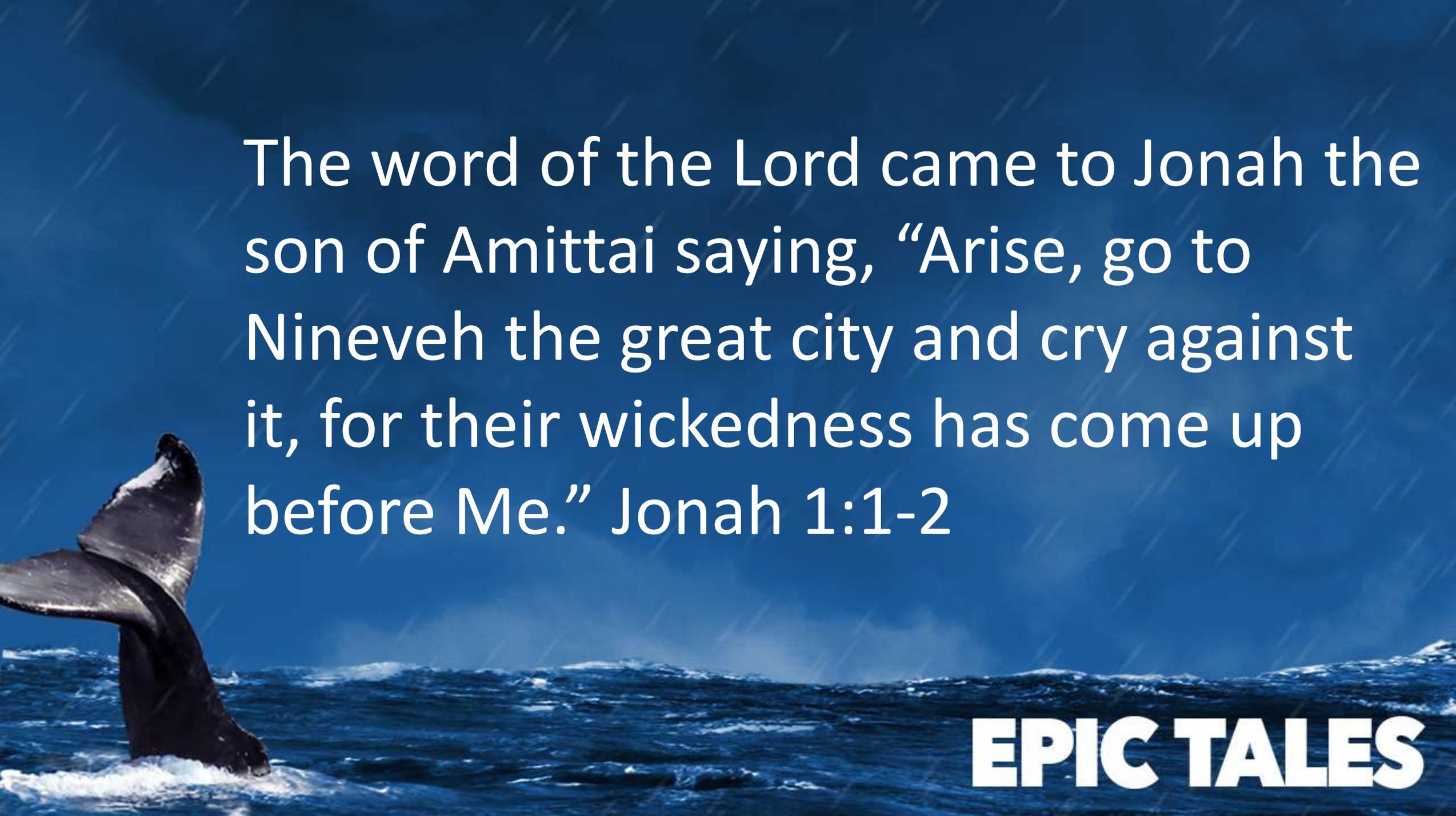
**EPIC TALES**



# Jonah chapter 1



**EPIC TALES**

A dramatic scene of a whale's tail fluke rising from the churning, dark blue ocean under a stormy, rain-filled sky. The water is turbulent with white foam from the waves. The whale's tail is dark and sleek, contrasting with the lighter, rain-soaked sky.

The word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying, “Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me.” Jonah 1:1-2

**EPIC TALES**

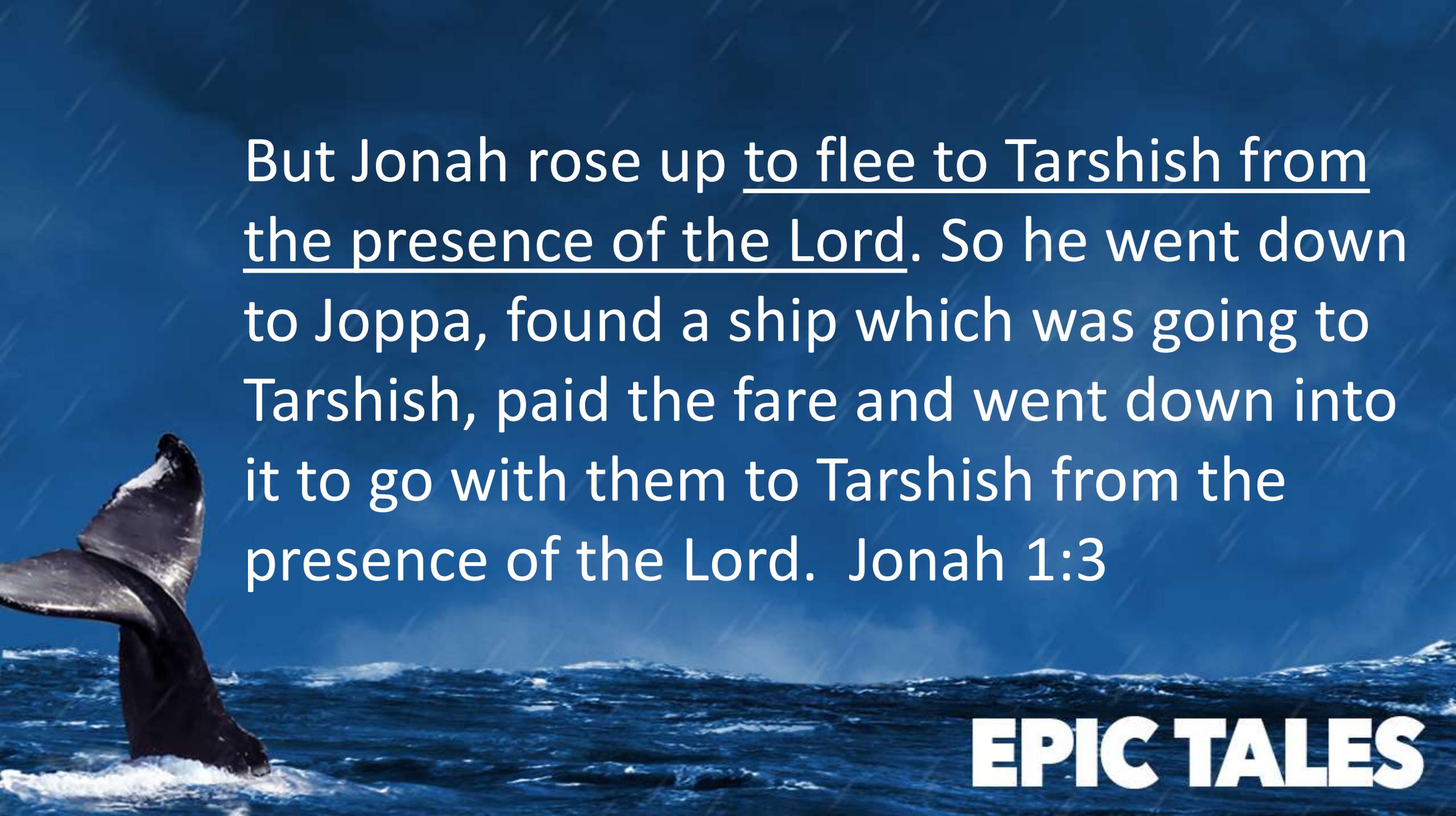
# What was Nineveh?

- Nineveh was located on the east bank of the Tigris River, about 550 miles from Samaria, capital of the Northern Kingdom.
- Nineveh was large and, like Babylon, was protected by an outer wall and an inner wall. Inner wall was 50 feet wide / 100 feet high.
- Before Jonah arrived at this seemingly impregnable fortress-city, two plagues had erupted there (in 765 and 759 BC) and a total eclipse of the sun occurred on June 15, 763 BC. These were considered signs of divine anger and may help explain why the Ninevites responded so readily to Jonah's message ca. 759 BC.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*

**EPIC TALES**



A photograph of a whale's tail fluke emerging from the ocean surface. The water is a deep blue with white foam from the whale's splash. The sky is a lighter blue with some light rain or mist visible. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. Jonah 1:3

**EPIC TALES**

In what areas of  
your life have you  
run away from God?

Does an open door  
always indicate the  
will of God?



Port of Joppa today

# The Jonah Travel Plan

Tarshish

Nineveh

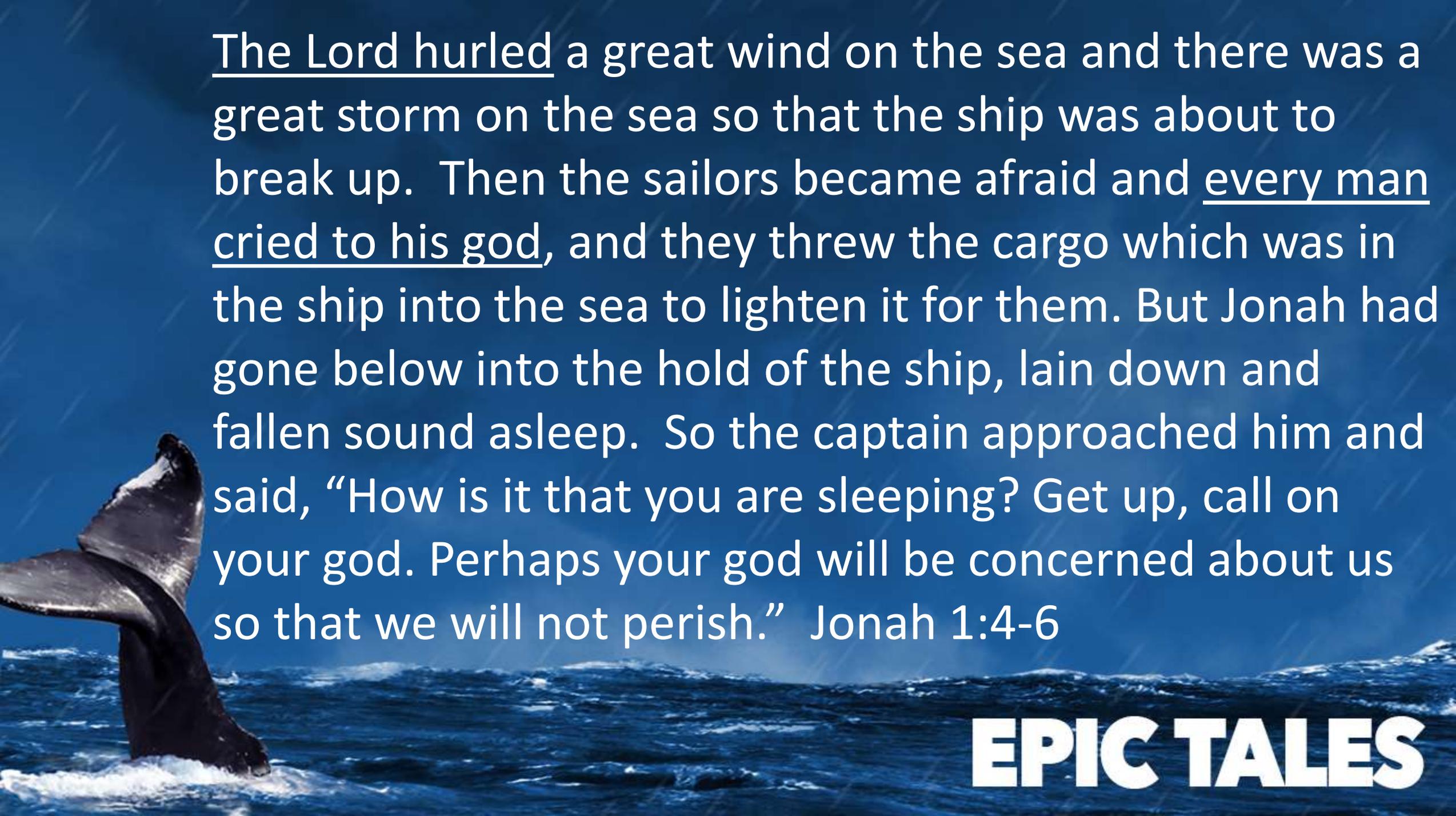
**The Roman World**

- Limits of direct Roman rule or political influence at the birth of Christ
- - - Provincial or state boundaries
- SYRIA Roman provinces
- LYCIA Client kingdoms or states

0 100 200 300 400 500 Miles  
0 200 400 600 800 Kilometers

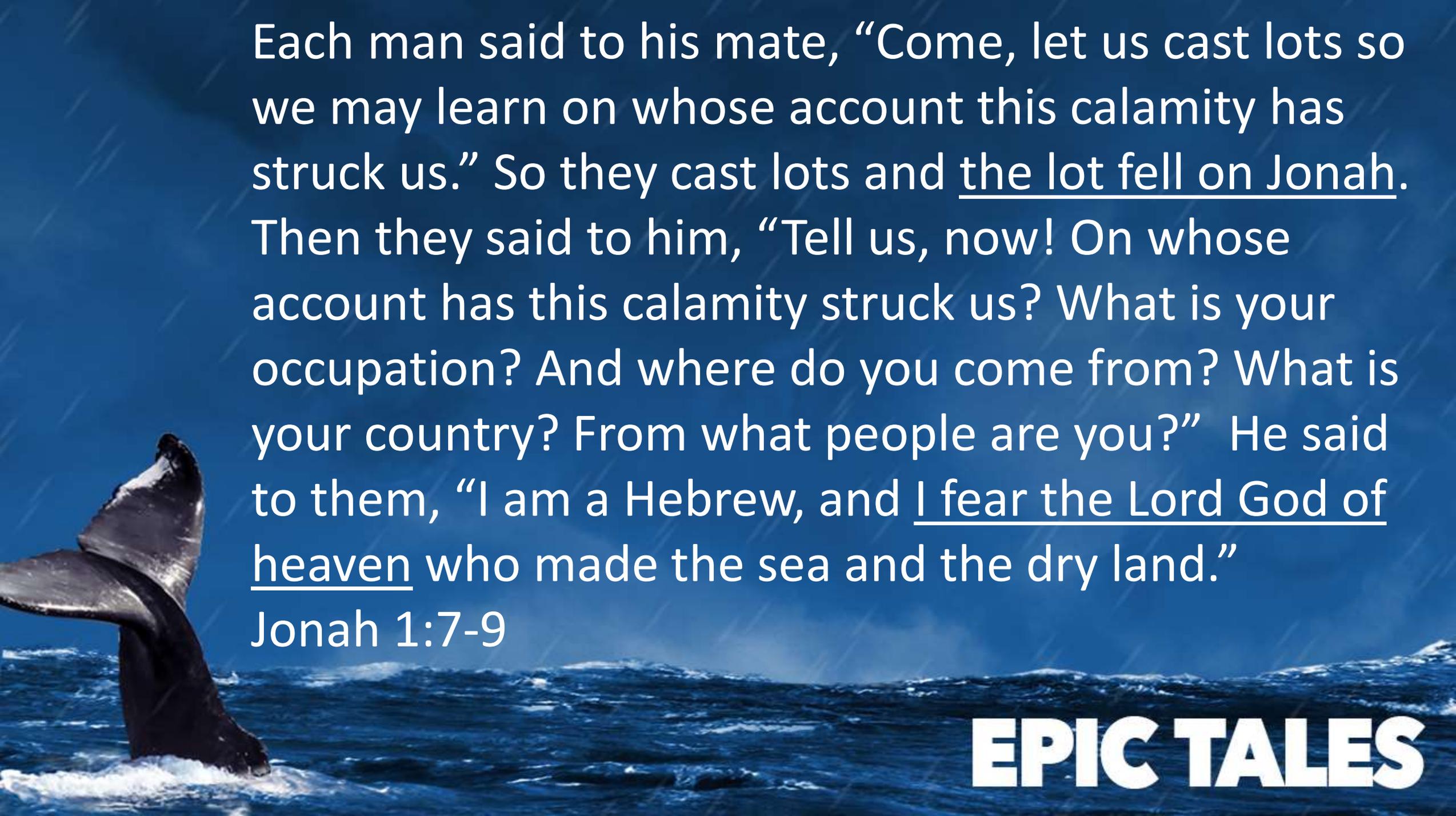
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The Lord hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up. Then the sailors became afraid and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down and fallen sound asleep. So the captain approached him and said, “How is it that you are sleeping? Get up, call on your god. Perhaps your god will be concerned about us so that we will not perish.” Jonah 1:4-6

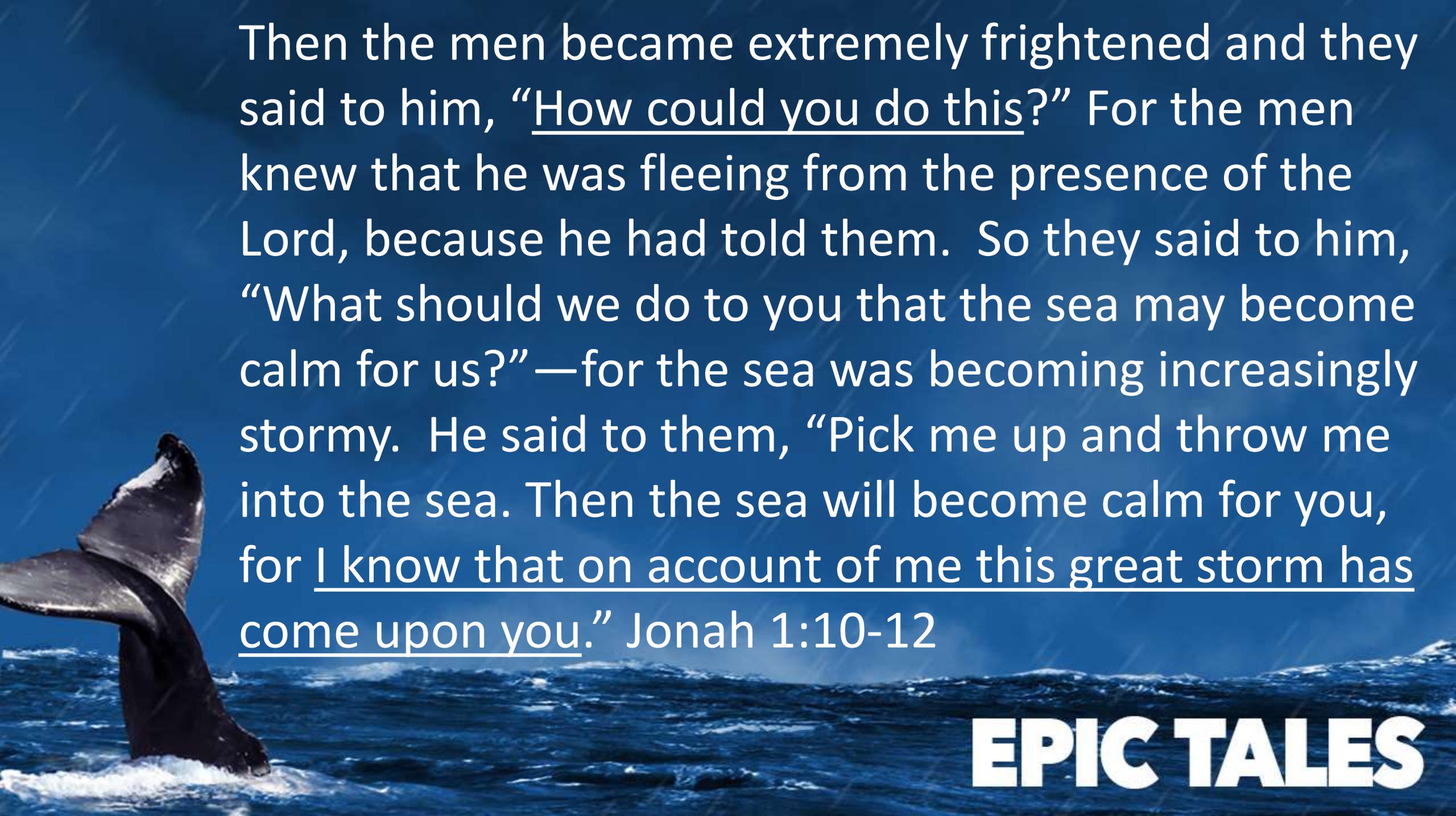
**EPIC TALES**



Each man said to his mate, “Come, let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity has struck us.” So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. Then they said to him, “Tell us, now! On whose account has this calamity struck us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?” He said to them, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land.”

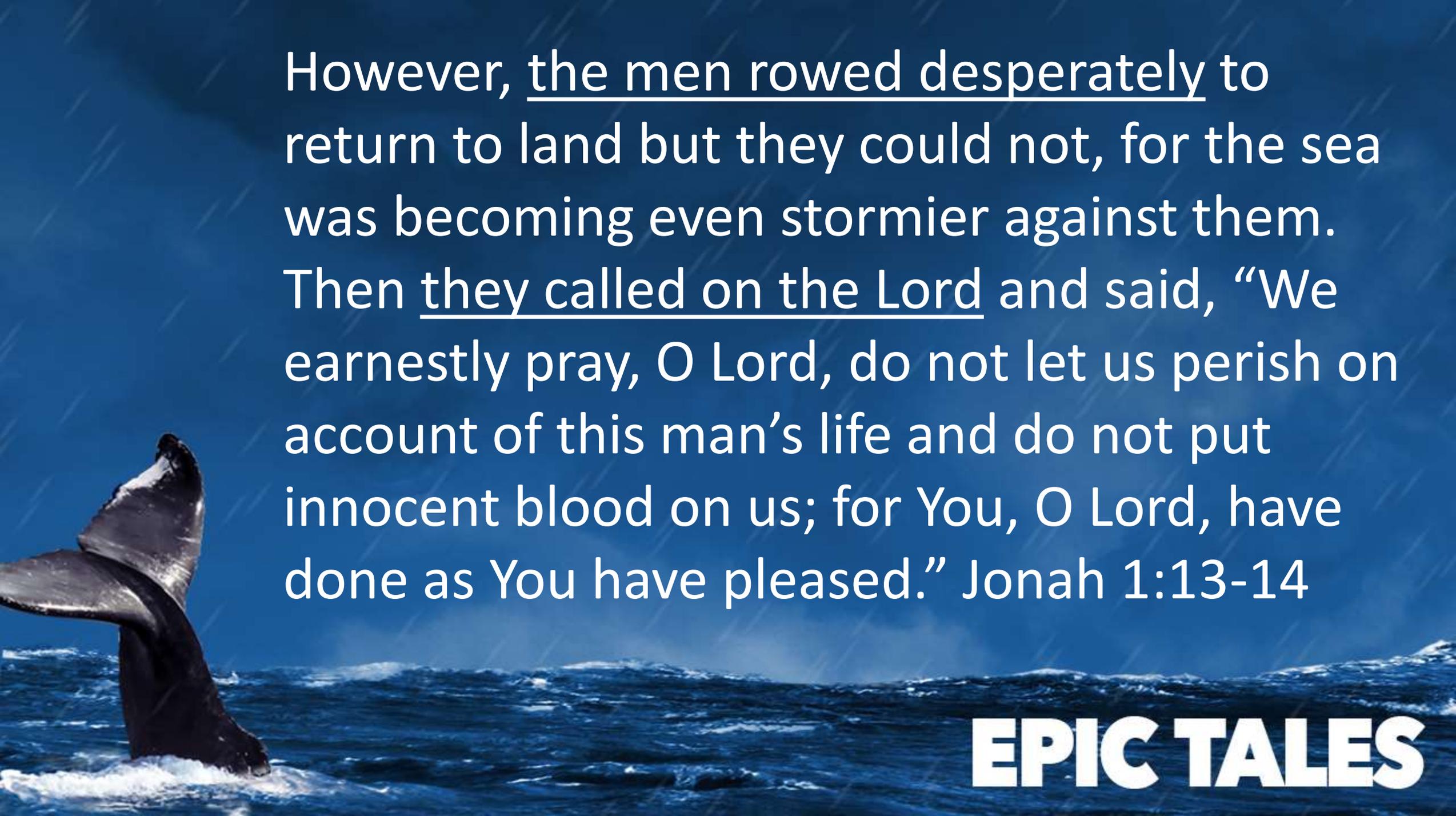
Jonah 1:7-9

**EPIC TALES**

A whale tail is seen breaching the surface of a dark blue ocean. The sky is a deep blue with light rain falling. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Then the men became extremely frightened and they said to him, “How could you do this?” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them. So they said to him, “What should we do to you that the sea may become calm for us?”—for the sea was becoming increasingly stormy. He said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that on account of me this great storm has come upon you.” Jonah 1:10-12

**EPIC TALES**

A dramatic scene of a whale's tail fluke rising from the churning, dark blue sea under a stormy sky with rain falling. The whale's tail is dark and sleek, contrasting with the white foam of the waves and the greyish-blue of the rain.

However, the men rowed desperately to return to land but they could not, for the sea was becoming even stormier against them. Then they called on the Lord and said, “We earnestly pray, O Lord, do not let us perish on account of this man’s life and do not put innocent blood on us; for You, O Lord, have done as You have pleased.” Jonah 1:13-14

**EPIC TALES**

A photograph of a whale's tail fluke emerging from the blue ocean, set against a background of a blue sky with light rain or mist. The whale's tail is dark and curved, with white foam at the base where it meets the water.

So they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging. Then the men feared the Lord greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows. And the Lord appointed a great fish [דָּג dag] to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights. Jonah 1:15-17

\*God can even use our disobedience for His glory

**EPIC TALES**

# Jonah chapter 2



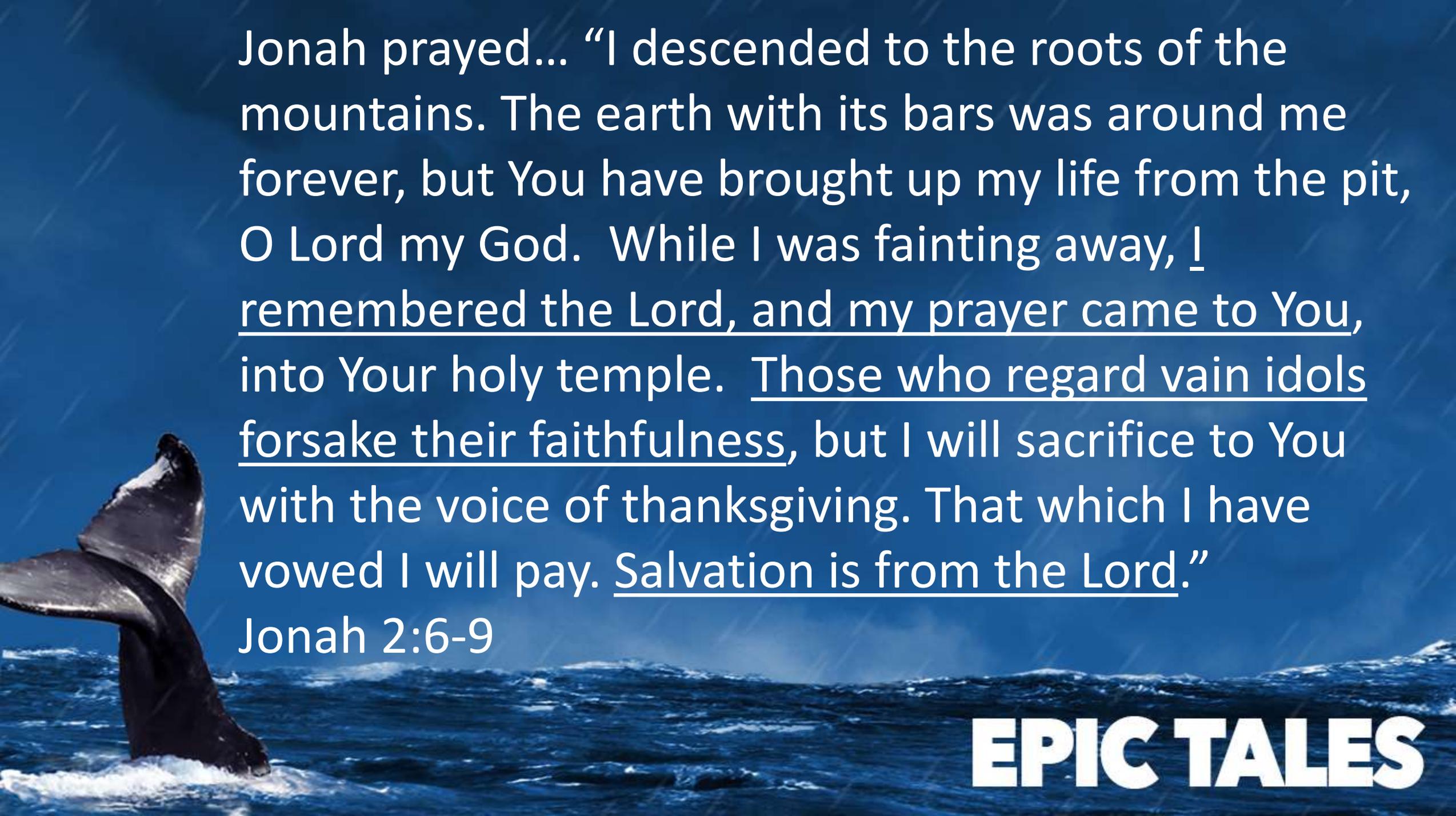
**EPIC TALES**

Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the stomach of the fish, and he said, “I called out of my distress to the Lord, and He answered me. I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; You heard my voice. For You had cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the current engulfed me. All Your breakers and billows passed over me. So I said, ‘I have been expelled from Your sight. Nevertheless I will look again toward Your holy temple.’ Water encompassed me to the point of death. The great deep engulfed me, weeds were wrapped around my head.”

Jonah 2:1-5

**EPIC TALES**



A photograph of a whale's tail fluke emerging from the ocean, set against a blue sky and sea background. The whale's tail is dark and curved, with white foam at the base where it meets the water. The ocean is a deep blue with white-capped waves.

Jonah prayed... “I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever, but You have brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God. While I was fainting away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to You, into Your holy temple. Those who regard vain idols forsake their faithfulness, but I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is from the Lord.”

Jonah 2:6-9

**EPIC TALES**

# What are the “worthless/vain idols” in my life?

Popularity

Selfishness

Money

The past

Fame

The future

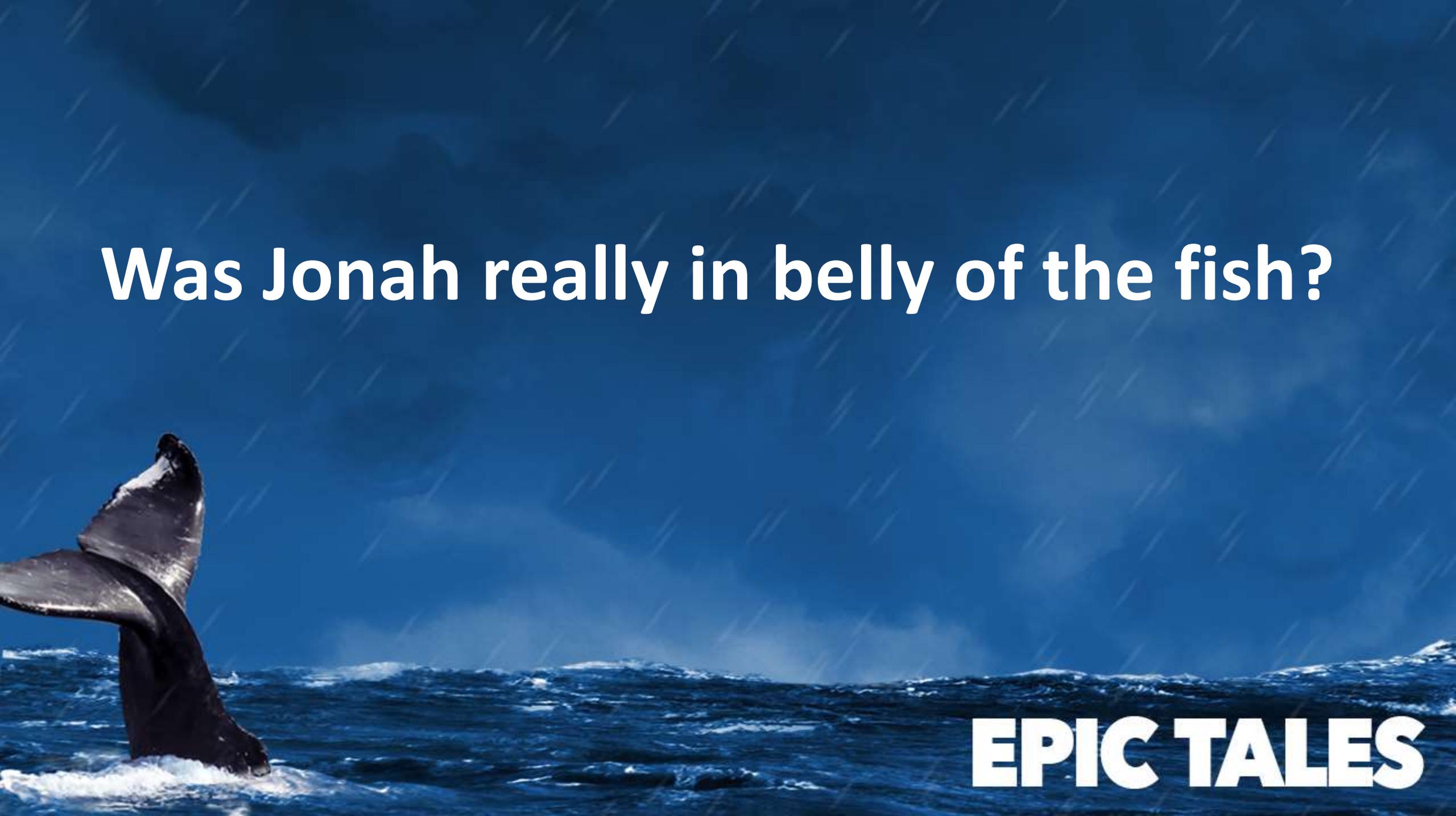
Power

My stuff

Fake religion

A large whale tail is visible on the left side of the image, emerging from the dark blue ocean. The background is a deep blue sky with light rain falling diagonally across the frame.

**EPIC TALES**

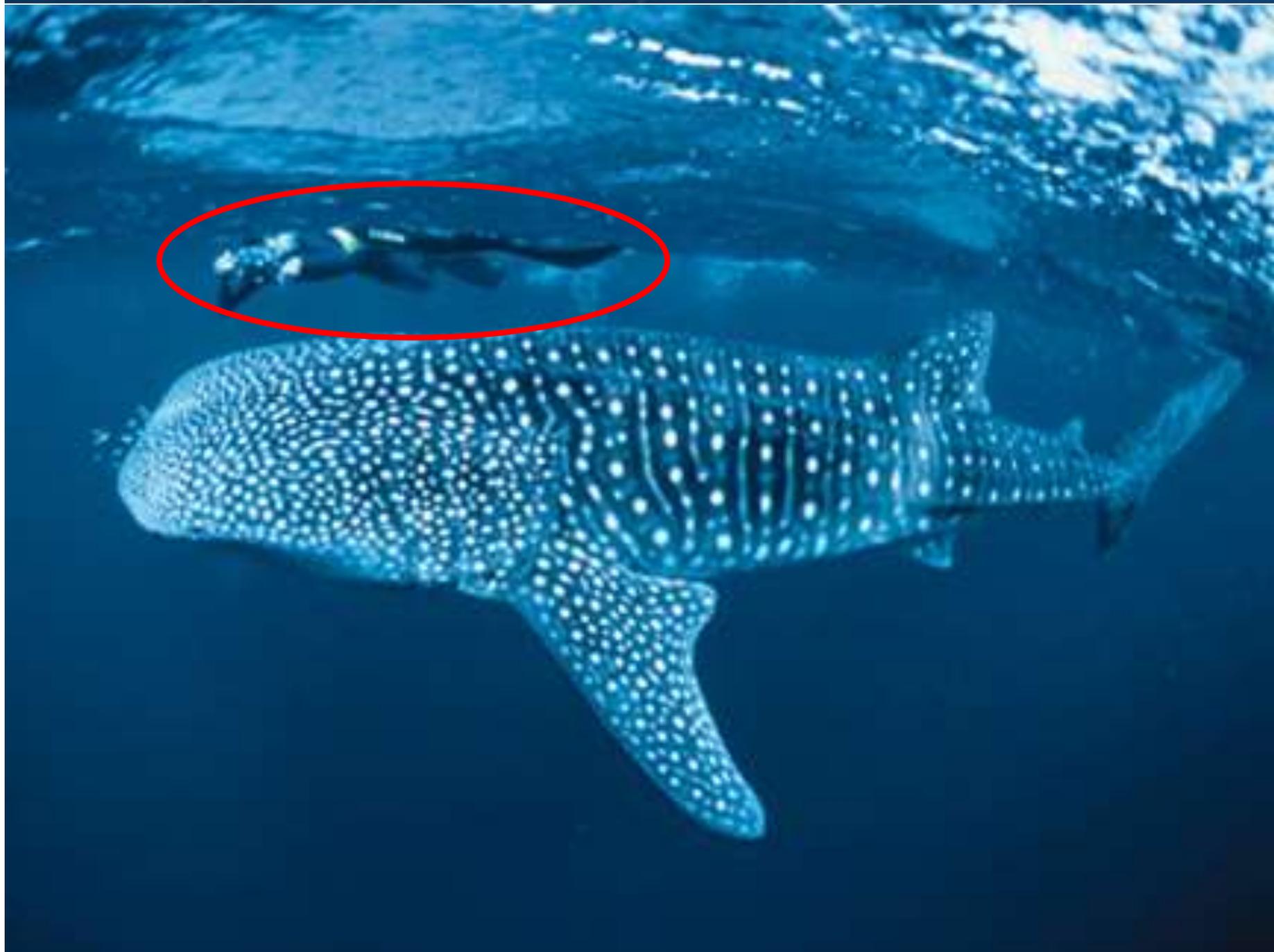
A dramatic scene of a whale's tail fluke rising from the churning, dark blue ocean under a stormy, dark sky. The water is turbulent with white foam from the waves. The whale's tail is dark and sleek, with a lighter patch near the top. The overall mood is intense and mysterious.

**Was Jonah really in belly of the fish?**

**EPIC TALES**

# *Rhincodon typus*

The **whale shark** is the largest known fish. Reaches 50-60 feet in length. Weight can exceed 20,000 pounds. This creature ranges all tropical waters. It is mainly solitary in nature, and, despite its impressive appearance, it is harmless to humans. Scuba divers and underwater swimmers have clambered unmolested over its body. The whale shark feeds chiefly on plankton, but also consumes sardines and anchovies.



# Australian shark attack survivor describes almost being swallowed alive

Published 1/24/2007



SYDNEY, Australia (AP) — A diver who was almost swallowed alive by a 10-foot-long shark said Wednesday a lead-lined vest prevented the animal from biting him in half and a chisel used for gathering shellfish allowed him to fend off the fish. Eric Nerhus, 41, described Tuesday's terrifying attack by a shark, believed to be a great white, off the fishing town of Eden, about 250 miles south of Sydney. Nerhus was working with his son and other divers collecting shellfish when the shark suddenly attacked him about 25 feet below the surface. The shark grabbed Nerhus by the head, said fellow diver Dennis Luobikis, who witnessed the attack. "Half my body was in its mouth," Nerhus told Australian television's Nine Network. Nerhus said he fought desperately. "I felt down to the eye socket with my two fingers and poked them into the socket," he said. "The shark reacted by opening its mouth and I just tried to wriggle out. It was still trying to bite me. It crushed my goggles into my nose and they fell into its mouth." He said he managed to finally escape the shark's jaws after jabbing at its eye with a chisel he used to chip abalone from rocks and was still holding despite the attack. Nerhus, who estimated he spent two minutes inside the shark's mouth, said his chest was protected from the shark's rows of teeth by a lead-lined vest used to weight him down in the water. As he swam to the surface in a cloud of his own blood, Nerhus said he could still see the shark and feared it would attack again. "It was just circling around my flippers, round in round in tight circles," he said. "The big round black eye, 5 inches wide, was staring straight into my face with just not one hint of fear, of any boat, or any human, or any other animal in the sea." He was helped into his boat by his son and rushed to a hospital where he was being treated for severe cuts to his head, torso and left arm.



# EPIC TALES

# Was Jonah really in the belly of the fish?

Jesus said, “An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Matthew 12:39-40



**EPIC TALES**

- The storms and fish of life often drive us to our knees in prayer
- God uses the storms and fish to remind us of our need for Him
- The next move after the fish is often toward God

**How will you respond to the storms and fish in your life?**

**EPIC TALES**



# The God of another chance

“Then the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land.” Jonah 2:10

- God gave Jonah another chance
- God’s plan did not change with Jonah’s disobedience
- Jonah had to be changed in order to make him obedient
- God may be offering you another chance today

A close-up photograph of a whale's tail fluke emerging from the ocean's surface, creating a splash of white water. The whale's skin is dark and textured, and the background shows the deep blue of the sea under a clear sky.

**EPIC TALES**

A photograph of a whale's tail fluke emerging from the ocean, set against a blue sky with light rain falling. The whale's tail is dark and curved, with white foam at the base where it meets the water. The background is a deep blue sky with diagonal streaks of light rain.

“Seven miracles have taken place already in this short narrative: God caused a violent storm (1:4), had the lot fall on Jonah (1:7), calmed the sea when Jonah was thrown overboard (1:15), commanded the fish to swallow Jonah (1:17), had the fish transport him safely, had the fish throw Jonah up on dry land, and perhaps greatest of all, melted the disobedient prophet’s heart.”

*Bible Knowledge Commentary*

**EPIC TALES**

# Jonah chapter 3



**EPIC TALES**

A close-up photograph of a whale's tail fluke emerging from the dark blue ocean, with white foam from the water splashing around the base of the tail. The background is a deep blue sky with light rays filtering through.

Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, “Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you.” So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three days’ walk. Jonah 3:1-3

\*God’s character and our mission do not change

**EPIC TALES**

# Explanation... A three days' walk

“The point is not that Nineveh had a certain circumference, but that three days were needed for a proper visit by a foreigner. On the first day a state visitor (ambassador, visiting royalty, etc.) would arrive, get settled, locate the appropriate government officials and present credentials to them. On the second day the visitor would be received by the official(s) in charge and the desired business would be conducted. On the third day an official send-off would be provided, with any responses to the government of the visiting state handed over to the emissaries at that time.” *New Bible Commentary*

**EPIC TALES**

# A Crisis of Belief

“Then Jonah began to go through the city one day’s walk; and he cried out and said, ‘Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown.’”  
Jonah 3:4

How do people respond when they finally understand that sin has consequences and that God is offering salvation?

**EPIC TALES**

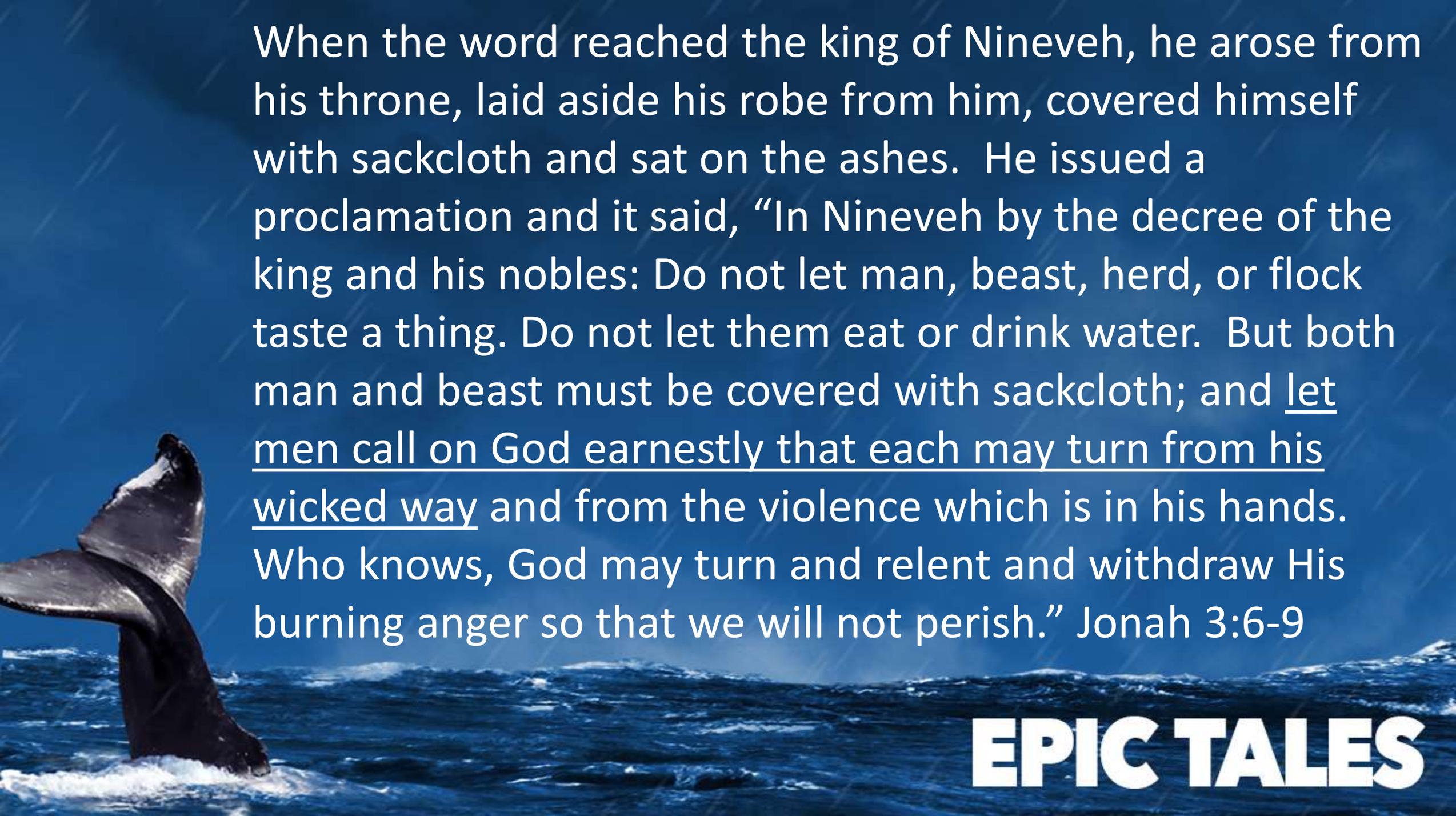


# A Call To Repentance

“Then the people of Nineveh  
believed in God; and they called a  
fast and put on sackcloth from the  
greatest to the least of them.”

Jonah 3:5

**EPIC TALES**

A photograph of a whale's tail fluke breaking the surface of the ocean. The water is a deep blue with white foam at the base of the tail. The sky is a clear, bright blue. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered himself with sackcloth and sat on the ashes. He issued a proclamation and it said, “In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water. But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands. Who knows, God may turn and relent and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish.” Jonah 3:6-9

**EPIC TALES**

# A Show of Mercy to the people of Nineveh

“When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented [נָחַם *nacham* – to have compassion] concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.”

Jonah 3:10

**EPIC TALES**



# Jonah chapter 4



**EPIC TALES**

Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them. Jonah 3:5

But it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry. Jonah 4:1

**What is the driving force in my life...  
obedience to a gracious God or hatred for a  
group of people who look and sound differently?**

**EPIC TALES**

# Will you love people who are different?

He prayed to the Lord and said, “Please Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity. Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life.” Jonah 4:2-3

**EPIC TALES**

# My values vs. God's values

The Lord said, "Do you have good reason to be angry?" Jonah 4:4

\*Does it bother you when God blesses others, especially those people who don't look like you?

**EPIC TALES**



# Be honest... what is important to you?

Then Jonah went out from the city and sat east of it. There he made a shelter for himself and sat under it in the shade until he could see what would happen in the city. So the Lord God appointed a plant and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to deliver him from his discomfort. And Jonah was extremely happy about the plant. Jonah 4:5-6

A whale's tail is visible on the left side of the image, emerging from the blue ocean. The background is a deep blue sky with light rays.

**EPIC TALES**

# The wrong perspective

But God appointed a worm when dawn came the next day and it attacked the plant and it withered. When the sun came up God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head so that he became faint and begged with all his soul to die, saying, "Death is better to me than life."  
Jonah 4:7-8

**EPIC TALES**

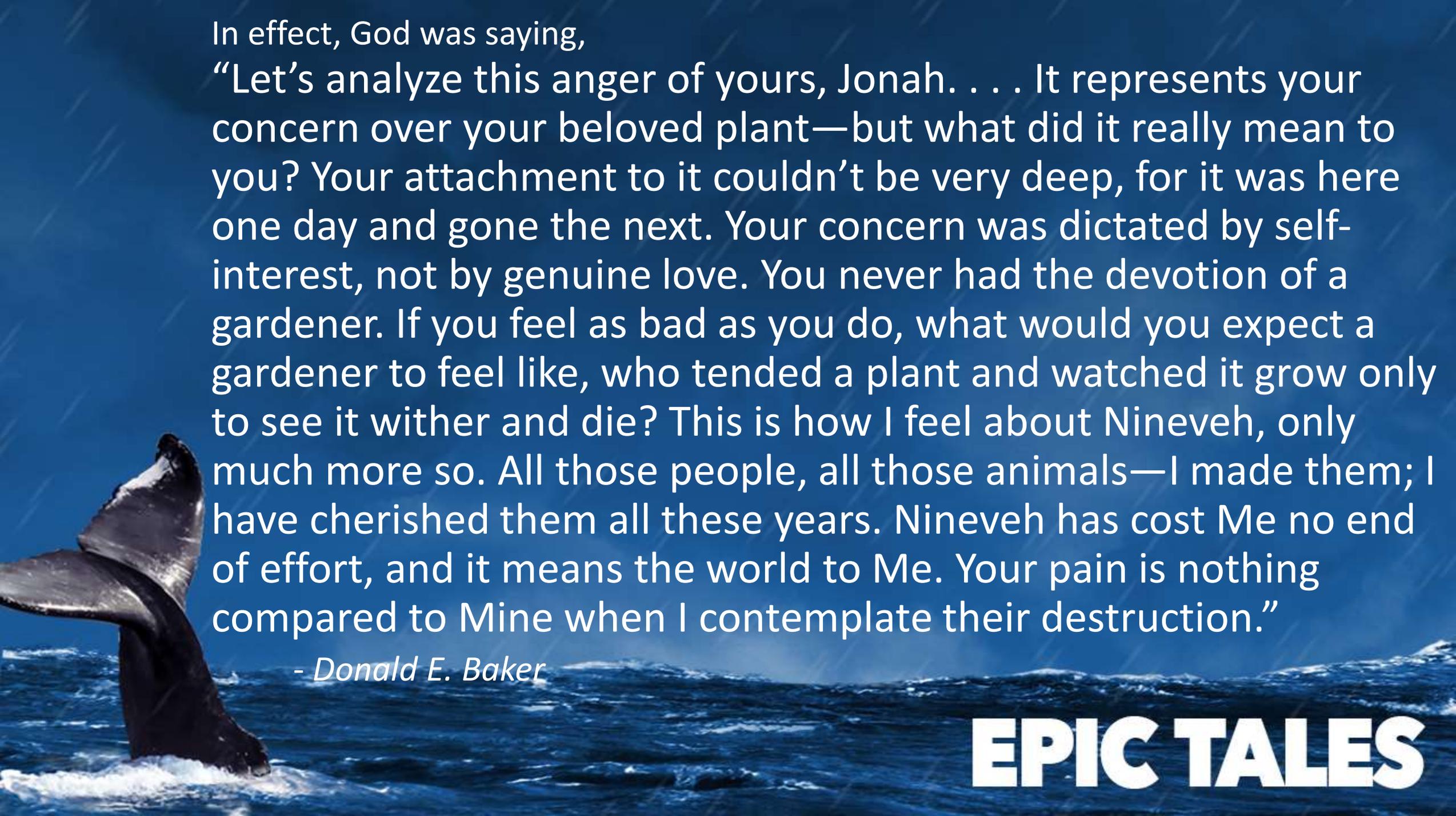


# Let's Check Our Priorities

Then God said to Jonah, “Do you have good reason to be angry about the plant?” And he said, “I have good reason to be angry, even to death.” Then the Lord said, “You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work and which you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight. Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?”

Jonah 4:9-11

**EPIC TALES**



In effect, God was saying,  
“Let’s analyze this anger of yours, Jonah. . . . It represents your concern over your beloved plant—but what did it really mean to you? Your attachment to it couldn’t be very deep, for it was here one day and gone the next. Your concern was dictated by self-interest, not by genuine love. You never had the devotion of a gardener. If you feel as bad as you do, what would you expect a gardener to feel like, who tended a plant and watched it grow only to see it wither and die? This is how I feel about Nineveh, only much more so. All those people, all those animals—I made them; I have cherished them all these years. Nineveh has cost Me no end of effort, and it means the world to Me. Your pain is nothing compared to Mine when I contemplate their destruction.”

- *Donald E. Baker*

**EPIC TALES**

# Is Jonah the main character of this story?

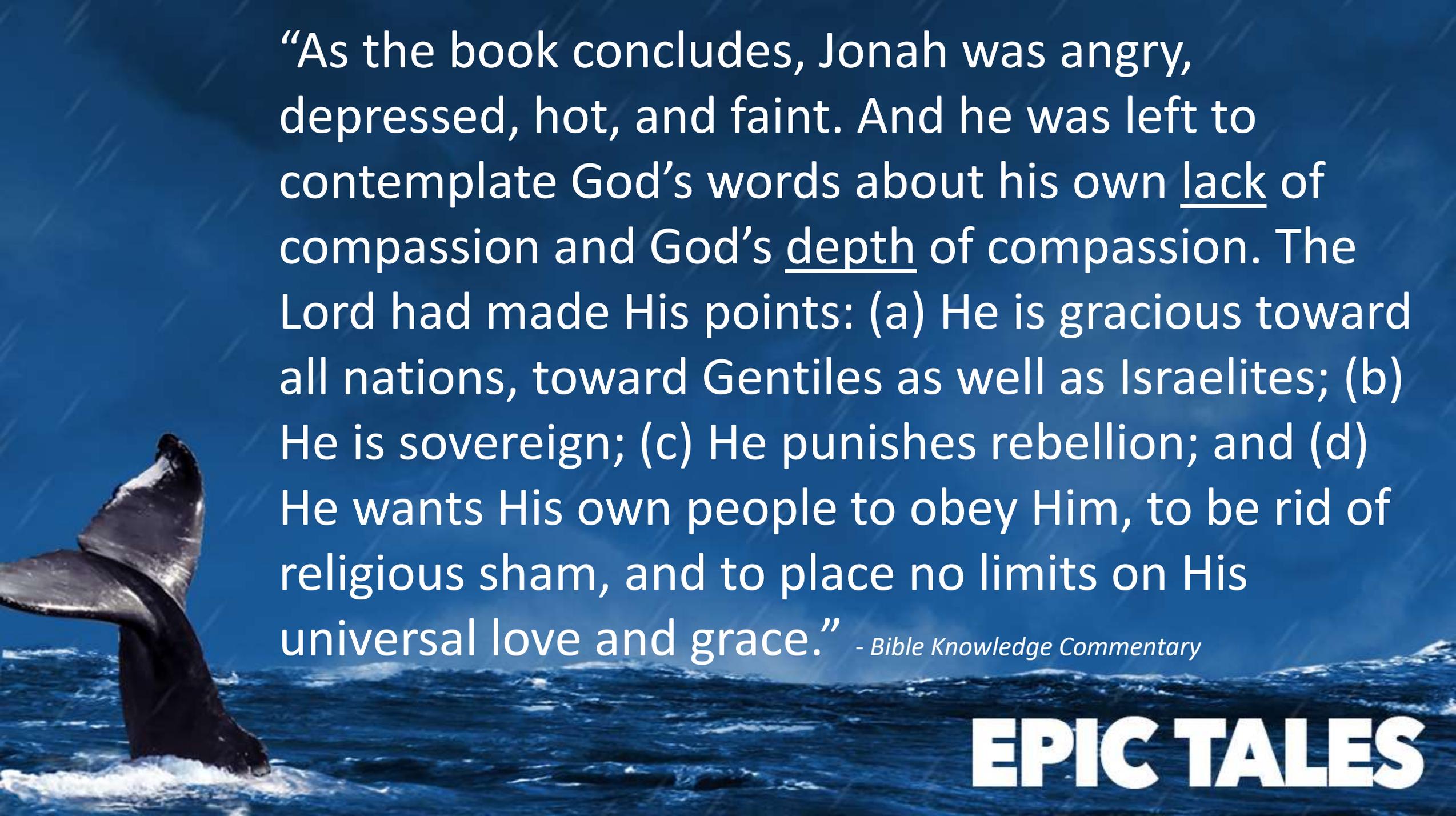
## No... God is.

The Lord had the first word (Jonah 1:1-2) and the last (4:11). God commanded the prophet twice (1:2; 3:2); He sent a violent storm on the sea (1:4); He provided a great fish to rescue Jonah (1:17); He commanded the fish to vomit Jonah onto dry land (2:10); He threatened Nineveh with judgment and relented in compassion (3:10); He provided a vine to shade His prophet (4:6); He commissioned a worm to destroy the plant (4:7); and He sent a scorching wind to discomfort Jonah (4:8).

*Source: Bible Knowledge Commentary*

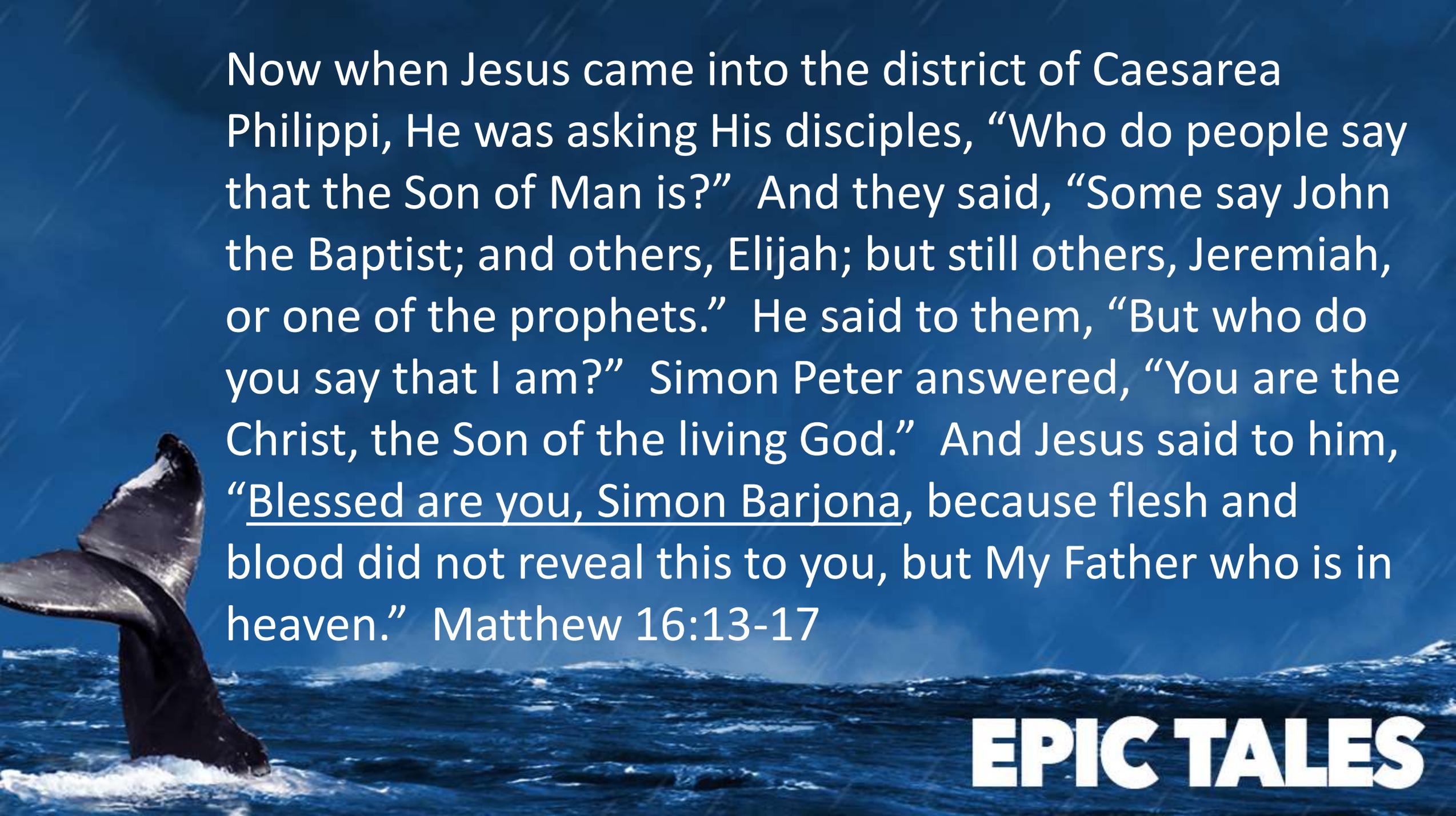
# EPIC TALES





“As the book concludes, Jonah was angry, depressed, hot, and faint. And he was left to contemplate God’s words about his own lack of compassion and God’s depth of compassion. The Lord had made His points: (a) He is gracious toward all nations, toward Gentiles as well as Israelites; (b) He is sovereign; (c) He punishes rebellion; and (d) He wants His own people to obey Him, to be rid of religious sham, and to place no limits on His universal love and grace.” - *Bible Knowledge Commentary*

**EPIC TALES**

A whale tail is seen breaching the surface of the ocean on the left side of the image. The water is a deep blue with white foam from the splash. The sky is a clear, bright blue. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 16:13-17

**EPIC TALES**

# What is our calling as a follower of Jesus?

The story of Jonah is a (reluctant) missionary story

The story of Peter is an (eventually convinced) missionary story

The story of Jesus is a (gracious and willing) missionary story

We are called to make disciples of Jesus

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