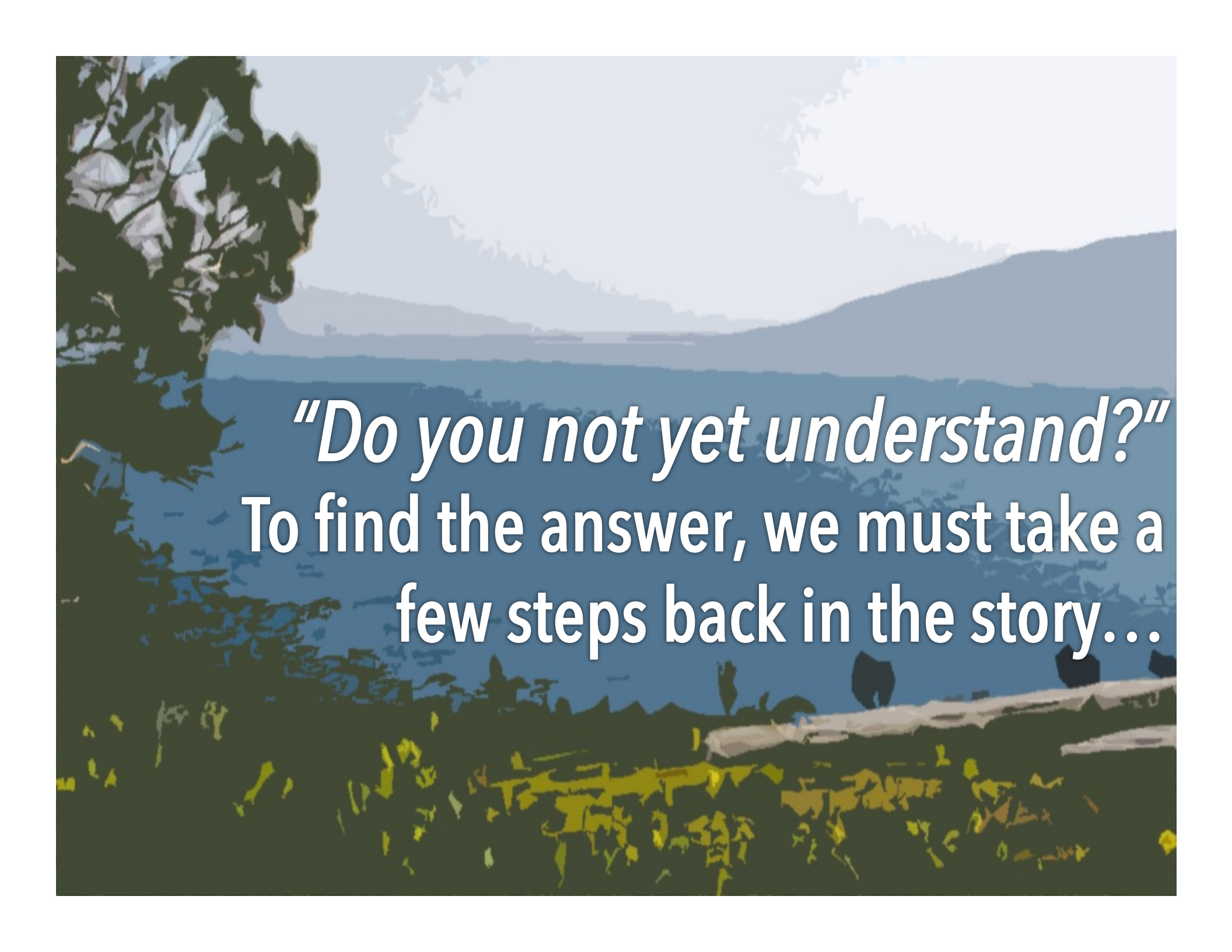




**BACK-AND-FORTH
ACROSS GALILEE**

They Had No Bread

- Mark 8:14-21 – We're going to start at the "end" of our story, to set up some challenging questions:
 - What is the significance of the "fact that they had no bread"? What about the leaven of the Pharisees?
 - Why does Jesus use bread throughout this context? Is there a connection that the disciples were supposed to make?
 - And why is Jesus so insistent that they ought to have understood a deeper lesson by now?

A scenic landscape featuring a large body of water in the middle ground, with rolling hills and mountains in the background. The foreground is filled with dense green foliage and trees. The sky is a pale, hazy blue. The text is overlaid in the center of the image.

“Do you not yet understand?”
To find the answer, we must take a
few steps back in the story...

The Sea of Galilee was named after the district. It had fresh, sweet water and abundant fish. The communities (such as Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Tiberias) depended on the fishing industry. The lake sits below sea level.

Most of Jesus' ministry took place around Galilee. His home was in Capernaum, along with most of His disciples.

The northern/western shores were primarily Jewish, and the southern/eastern shores were overwhelmingly Gentile. This fact is significant, as we will soon realize.



The story begins somewhere on the Jewish side of the Sea of Galilee, probably near the city of Tiberias. Jesus wanted a "lonely place" to pray and rest (Mark 6:32-34, John 6:1), but a multitude discovers Him.

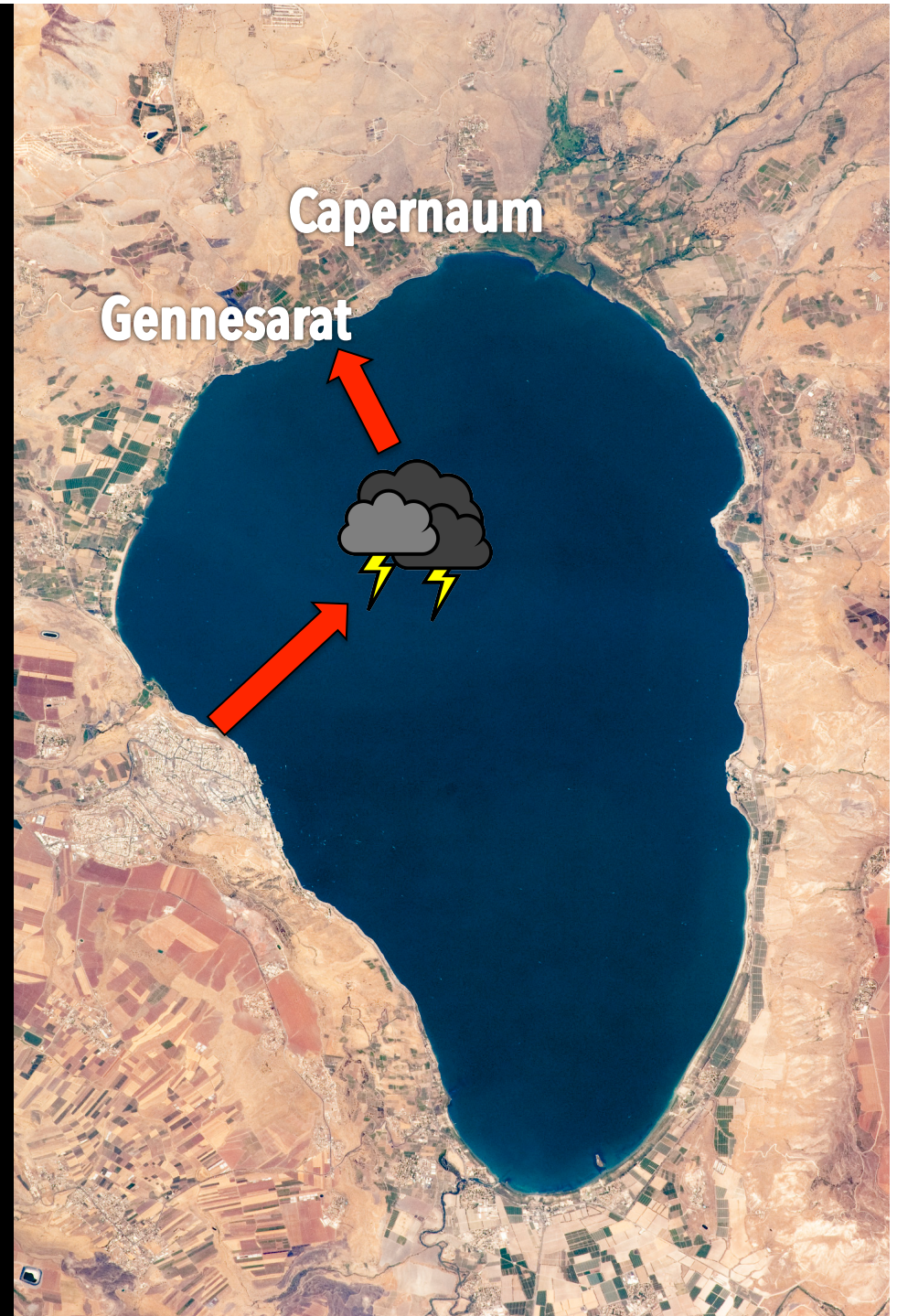


As Mark 6:35-44 and John 6:2-14 explain, Jesus feels compassion for the multitude and commands His disciples to provide food for them. They comply after some early doubts, seeing the miraculous nature of the event, and gather up the leftover food. There are **twelve** full baskets of fish and bread after every person has eaten his or her fill.



He then commands His disciples to head in the direction of Capernaum and Bethsaida (Mark 6:44, John 6:17), but they encounter a storm along the way. After witnessing Jesus calm the storm, they end up landing at Gennesarat (Mark 6:53).

Many miracles take place in the villages between Gennesarat and Capernaum (Mark 6:56). It is also during this time that the Pharisees confront Jesus about His disciples' failure to wash their hands (Mark 7:1ff).



Taking Stock... Of Bread

- It is hard to ignore the role of "bread" in these stories:
 - The multitude lacked it
 - Jesus provided it
 - His disciples handled it
 - Everybody was satisfied
 - They wanted more, but did not confront their deeper spiritual need (John 6:26ff)
 - The Pharisees wanted it on their own terms
 - Jesus declared all foods clean (Mark 7:19)

Seemingly out-of-the-blue, Jesus takes His disciples on a "field trip" of sorts to the region of Tyre. There He heals the daughter of a Gentile woman, a Syrophenician (Mark 7:24-30). And what do you guess features prominently in their conversation? Yep, bread (7:27-28).

As if that is not strange enough, Jesus then drags His disciples all the way to Decapolis in order to heal a man who was deaf and spoke with difficulty (Mark 7:31ff).



A scenic landscape featuring a large body of water in the middle ground, with distant mountains and hills in the background. The foreground is dominated by the dark, silhouetted branches of a tree on the left and some green foliage at the bottom. The sky is a pale, hazy blue. The overall tone is serene and natural.

**Is there something significant
about Decapolis? Why go there?**


The disciples already had reasons to be wary of Decapolis. It was a cluster of semi-autonomous Hellenistic cities that represented everything worldly and depraved about Gentile culture. There were herds of pigs roaming the countryside, to boot (Mark 5:1ff).

But here is Jesus, healing Gentiles and feeding thousands of them (Mark 8:1-10) with the same miraculous power with which He helped the Jews. There are **seven** baskets of leftovers. He eventually leaves Decapolis to confront the Pharisees in Dalmanutha (Mark 8:10-12).



One More Sea Crossing

- Jesus takes His disciples to Bethsaida, while discussing the events of the past few days/weeks (Mark 8:14-21).
- Now that we have established a broader view of this story, we can see what Jesus was trying to teach His disciples. They were expected to understand, to glean information and lessons from the many people and places they encountered on this strange, exhausting journey back-and-forth across the Sea of Galilee.
- In particular, the Lord asks them to remember the number of leftover baskets at each miraculous meal...

An aerial photograph of the Sea of Galilee, showing the dark blue water of the lake surrounded by a brown, arid landscape with some green patches of vegetation and small settlements. The image is framed by a black border.

Twelve leftover baskets represent the gift of grace offered "to the Jew first" (Romans 1:16).

Seven leftover baskets represent the whole world. Seven is a complete number in Hebrew symbolism.

Do You Understand...

- That some lessons take great time and patience to learn? Jesus literally had his disciples hiking for miles, over many days, just so He could prove a point.
- That we cannot allow the leaven of the Pharisees into our lives? We must never let pettiness, "small religion", favoritism, and false piety blind us to the spiritual needs of those around us.
- That **we** are the beneficiaries of God's marvelous gift of bread? Like the heathens from Decapolis, or the woman from Tyre, we receive the bread of salvation freely from the hand of our Maker.

