

PART 7 — ATOP MOUNT ARBEL,  
OVERLOOKING THE SEA OF GALILEE

# DOWN THE MOUNTAIN

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## *Mount Arbel*

Beside the Sea of Galilee's western shore, Mount Arbel towers over the fertile Plain of Gennesaret.







**ANCHOR TEXT:** Before diving in to this teaching, read Matthew 28:16-20.

## MOUNT ARBEL

From the beginning, mountains have been places where people have experienced powerful encounters with God. At creation, God dwelled with Adam and Eve in the **Garden of Eden**, an elevated place in modern-day Iraq from which four rivers flowed (Genesis 2:10). Centuries after Adam's sin, God judged the sinful world with a global flood, delivering Noah's family by bringing the ark to land on **Mount Ararat** in eastern Turkey (Genesis 8:4).

On **Mount Moriah** in Canaan, Abraham learned that the one true God is different from all idols. While false gods demanded sacrifices, the true God promised to provide the sacrifice Himself (Genesis 22:14). Not only did God fulfill this promise in Abraham's life on Moriah, but God brought this promise to its ultimate fulfillment when He delivered His Son to **Mount Zion** 2,000 years later. There, on an elevated hill outside Jerusalem, Jesus died on the cross in our place as an atoning sacrifice, bearing the judgment that our sin deserves (1 John 4:10). Out of sheer grace

and love, God provided the sacrifice all of us need.

About 1,500 years before Jesus, it was on **Mount Sinai**, in the peninsula between Egypt and Arabia, that God delivered His law to Moses (Exodus 31:18). Here, the Lord revealed His character and His will more vividly than ever before, inviting the people of Israel into a loving relationship with Him. Six hundred years later, in northwestern Israel by the Mediterranean Sea, God called down fire on **Mount Carmel** as Elijah faced the idol-worshipping prophets of

Baal and Asherah (1 Kings 18:19). While the false prophets were drawing Israel away from God, the Lord used Elijah to manifest His true power. The people were left with no question: "The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God" (18:39).

Fast forward to Jesus' ministry, and we see another revelation of God's power at **Mount Tabor** by southern Galilee's Jezreel Valley. Here, Jesus was transfigured in the presence of Peter, James, and John—His divine glory shone through with heavenly radiance (Matthew 17:1-2). Then, the





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**Mount Arbel**

It is estimated that 80% of Jesus' ministry took place within view of this mountain.

Father's voice echoed down from Heaven: "This is my Son whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him" (17:5). God made it crystal clear: Jesus was no mere man, but the eternal, only-begotten Son of God, sent into the world to save sinners (John 1:14). On another hill in Galilee, today called the **Mount of Beatitudes**, Jesus gave His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1). Here, He spoke clearly about His Father, the God who is compassionate, loving, and gracious.

In light of all these mountaintop moments, it's no surprise that Jesus told His disciples during the Last Supper that they should meet Him in Galilee after His death and resurrection (Matthew 26:32). After Christ was raised, Mary Magdalene and Mary Salome encountered an angel who confirmed Jesus' words, telling them to meet Christ on a Galilean mountain (Matthew 28:1-5).

This mountain was likely **Mount Arbel**, the most prominent ridge overlooking the Sea of Galilee. After Jesus' redeeming work was accomplished—the sacrifice which God supplied—and after He conquered death itself through His glorious resurrection, Jesus wanted His followers to know with certainty what their lives would look like from that moment on. More than 500 people gathered on the mountain that day to hear what Christ had to say (1 Corinthians 15:6).

Jesus began with these words: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18). His resurrection proved He was the Messiah, the promised King of kings and Savior of the world. Now, Jesus was instructing His disciples on what they should do with His power.



Jesus continued, “Therefore, go...” (Matthew 28:19). The word here translated as “go,” *poreuthéntes*, can be translated more actively as “going” or “as you go.” Everyone on the mountain knew this powerful moment wasn’t going to last forever. Soon they would head back down into the plains below, where they would encounter their neighbors and friends going about their everyday lives. “As you go,” Jesus said, “make disciples of all nations” (28:19).

The apostle John, one of the people on the mountain that day, would later instruct Christians that if they claimed to be followers of Jesus, they would need to walk as Jesus walked (1 John 2:6). For three years, Jesus showed His disciples what it looked like to live in light of the Gospel, the good news of salvation for everyone who turns to Christ in faith. Jesus had intentionally and relationally poured His life into these followers: teaching them, praying with them, showing them how to love God and how to love people for God’s glory.

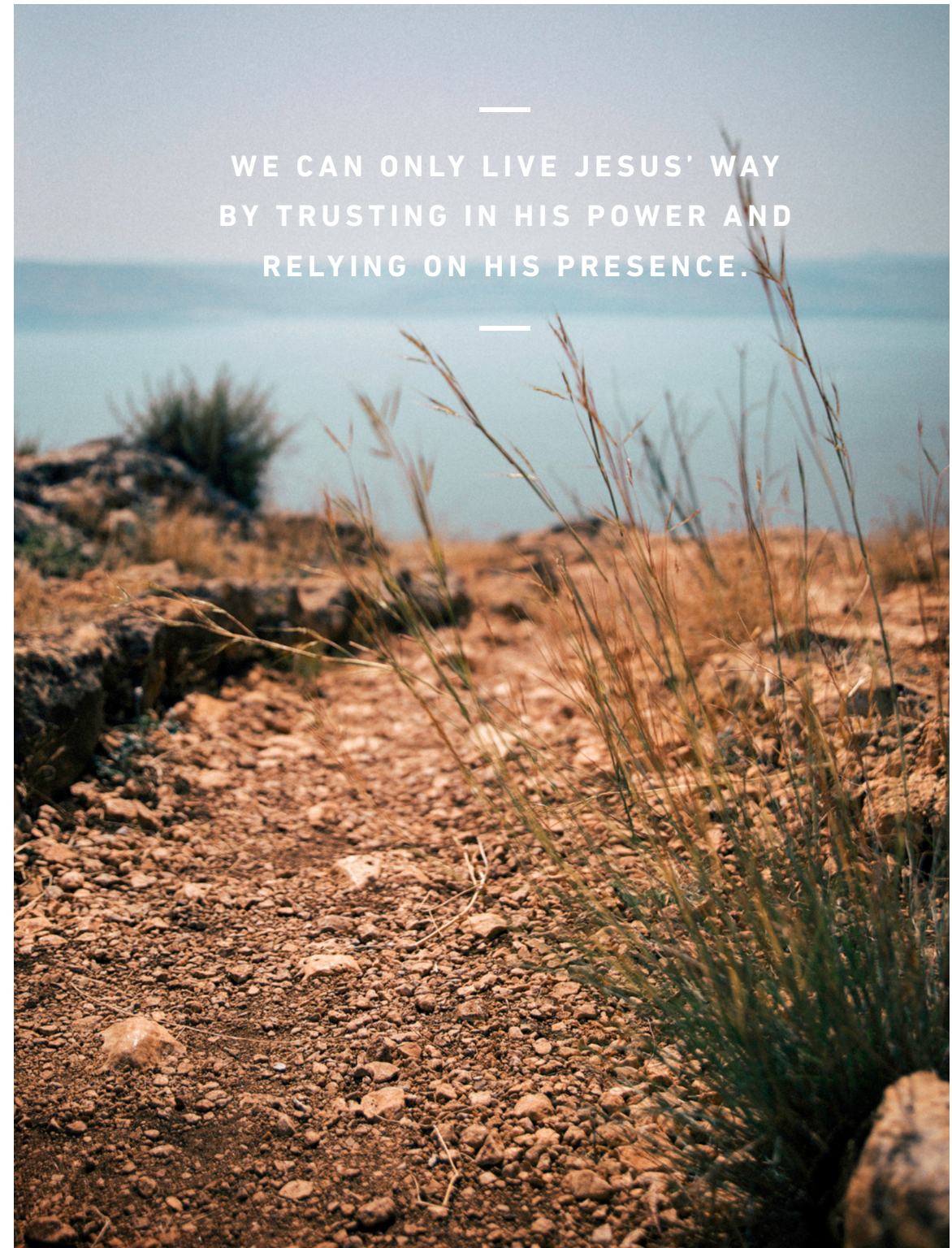
Now, Jesus was giving His disciples a call and a commission to reach others with the message of His saving grace. It was their turn to make disciples—not by their own strength or cleverness, but by His power at work within them.

What should these disciples do when they went to tell people about Christ? Jesus told them to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). When we baptize people who have placed their trust in Jesus, we’re baptizing them with the message of the Gospel into a new identity as the redeemed, adopted, forgiven, and transformed children of God. Baptism isn’t just getting

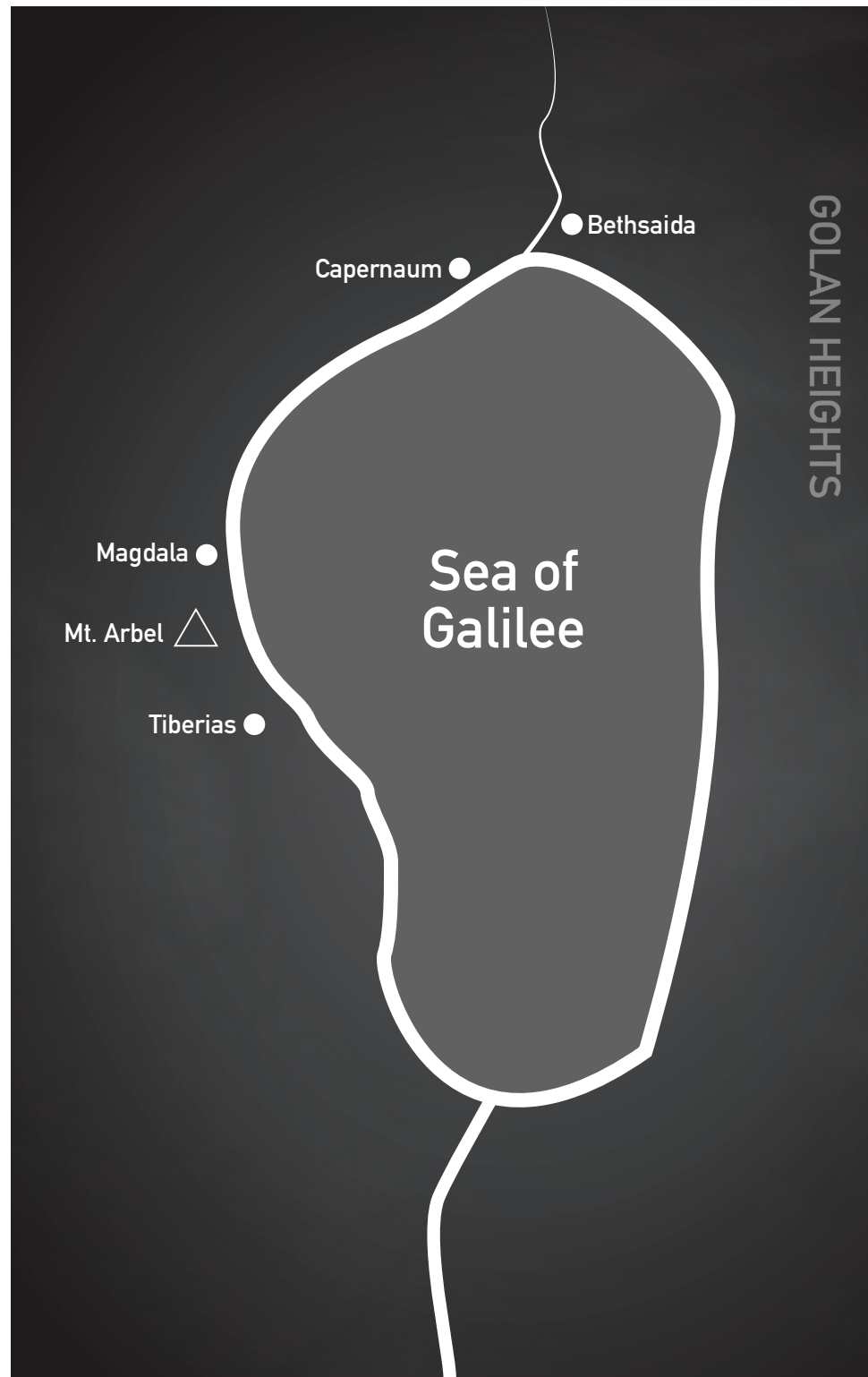
dunked into the water, it’s a powerful participation in the grace of Jesus’ death and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4). By going down and coming up out of the water, we are also declaring that our old lives are over. Now Christ stands at the center of who we are.

With this new identity in view, Jesus told them to make disciples by “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20). Real faith in Jesus is a faith that obeys (James 2:17). Faith takes seriously Jesus’ command to “Take my yoke upon you” (Matthew 11:29) and walk according to His truth. But with the same breath, Christ also said, “For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (11:30). Obedience can be hard, especially if we’re trying to do it in our own power. But just as Jesus invites us to walk according to His truth—the revealed truth of God’s Word—He promises us that He will help us, carry us, and sustain us day by day (Philippians 1:6). We can only live Jesus’ way by trusting in His power and relying on His presence.

And so, as Jesus’ disciples were about to descend the mountain and enter the valleys and challenges that were ahead, He concluded with the word *idouí*, meaning “Behold!” or “Look in My eyes!” Jesus knew what He was calling His disciples to do. What He wanted them to know was that He would always be at their side: “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). Jesus didn’t just give them clarity on the mountain, but the promise of His presence through the gift of the Holy Spirit. He would be with them, and He will be with us, the whole of every moment as we seek to make disciples in His name.







## ? DIVE DEEPER

- <sup>1</sup> Mountains are mentioned more than 500 times in Scripture and are often poetic symbols of God's presence. How would you describe some mountaintop experiences you've had in your life?
- <sup>2</sup> Has someone ever discipled you, pouring into your life intentionally and relationally to help you follow Jesus? What did that relationship look like, and how has God used that person in your life?
- <sup>3</sup> Read Matthew 28:16–20. Jesus talked to the disciples on a mountain, but He commanded them to make disciples as they went back home in the valley. What does disciple-making look like in the 'valleys' of life?
- <sup>4</sup> We've been given Jesus' authority to spread the Kingdom of God. What's holding you back from living out Jesus' command to make disciples? What next step can you take to relationally and intentionally make disciples?

## 🕒 EXTRA INFO

Some significant mountains in the Bible:

- **Garden of Eden:** Adam and Eve live in harmony with God in this elevated garden before they fall into sin (Genesis 2:10; Ezekiel 28:13-14).
- **Mount Ararat:** God brings Noah's ark to rest atop the mountains of eastern Turkey (Genesis 8:4).
- **Mount Moriah:** Abraham is spared from sacrificing his son Isaac because God provides the sacrifice Himself on this mountain in Canaan (Genesis 22:14).
- **Mount Sinai (Horeb):** After God delivers them out of slavery in Egypt, Moses and the Israelites encounter Him at this wilderness mountain and receive His law (Exodus 31:18). Later, Elijah encounters God here as he is running from Queen Jezebel (1 Kings 19:8).
- **Mount Gerizim:** The Israelites recite God's promises and warnings here before they enter the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 11:29).
- **Mount Ebal:** God leads Moses up this mountain to see the Promised Land shortly before his death (Deuteronomy 34:1).
- **Mount Tabor:** God uses Deborah and Barak (Judges 4:14) to save the tribes of Israel from attacks by the Canaanites. Later, Jesus is transfigured here (Matthew 17:1-2).
- **Mount Zion (Jerusalem):** King David conquers this city in the central mountains of Canaan and claims it as the capital of Israel (2 Samuel 5:7). Solomon builds God's temple here (1 Kings 6:1), later rebuilt by Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 1:2; Nehemiah 2:17), and again by Herod (John 2:20). Outside the city, Jesus is crucified, buried, and resurrected for our salvation.
- **Mount Carmel:** The prophet Elijah defeats 450 false prophets on this mountain in northwestern Israel as God brings down fire to reveal His power (1 Kings 18:19).
- **Mount of Beatitudes:** Jesus gives His Sermon on the Mount near the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 5:1).
- **Mount of Olives:** Just east of the walls of Jerusalem, Jesus gives the Olivet Discourse, teaching about His second coming (Mark 13:3). Later, Jesus comes to the Garden of Gethsemane on the slopes of this mountain to pray to His Father before His arrest (Matthew 26:36).
- **The New Jerusalem:** Our final dwelling place with Jesus, when He returns to make all things new, is described both as a mountain (Hebrews 12:22) and a city (Revelation 21:10).