3rd Missionary Journey – Build

Read Acts 18:23–21:16.

Paul's third missionary journey was more than another effort to reach new cities. He returned to strengthen the disciples where he had already planted seeds, Investing extended time teaching believers how to live as followers of Yeshua. The Gospel was taking root in congregations that needed sound instruction, faithful leadership, and courage in the face of opposition.

The Lord was building His Church through His Word and the work of the Holy Spirit. From Ephesus to Macedonia and Greece, Paul taught publicly and from house to house, encouraged fellow believers, and prepared leaders to care for the people God had entrusted to them.

Talking Points

- Paul traveled through Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening the disciples. In Ephesus, Apollos had been instructed more accurately by Priscilla and Aquila, while Paul later met disciples who knew only John's baptism and explained the fulfillment of John's message in Yeshua (Acts 18:23–19:7).
- Paul taught in Ephesus for an extended period, first in the synagogue and then in the hall of Tyrannus. The Word of the Lord spread widely, and many turned away from occult practices. The Gospel's impact on idolatry and commerce provoked a riot (Acts 19:8–41).
- Paul encouraged believers in Macedonia and Greece. At Troas, he spoke late into the night; Eutychus fell from a window and was restored to life. The travelers then continued toward Jerusalem (Acts 20:1–16).
- At Miletus, Paul summoned the elders of the Ephesian congregation. He reminded them of his example, warned about false teachers, and charged them to shepherd God's flock. Though warned that

suffering awaited him, Paul continued toward Jerusalem (Acts 20:17–21:16).

Background

The word “Build” captures the emphasis of this journey. Making disciples involves more than announcing the Gospel once. Paul revisited congregations, explained the Scriptures, corrected misunderstanding, and helped believers mature. In Ephesus, sustained teaching enabled the message to spread throughout the province of Asia (Acts 19:10).

The events surrounding Apollos and the disciples in Ephesus should not be confused. Apollos knew the Scriptures and was a powerfu teacher. But he only knew part of the story of Yeshua. Priscilla and Aquila explained the way of God to him more accurately (Acts 18:24–28). The men Paul encountered in Acts 19 knew only John’s baptism. Paul explained that John pointed forward to Yeshua; they were baptized in the Lord Jesus’ name and received the Holy Spirit. Luke presents two distinct encounters, each showing the importance of a complete, unfragmented understanding of Yeshua.

Ephesus was a center of pagan worship and commerce. As people believed, some publicly renounced magic and destroyed costly books associated with it. Opposition arose when Demetrius, a silversmith, feared that the spread of the Gospel would damage the trade connected with Artemis worship. Genuine discipleship affected everyday loyalties, not merely religious vocabulary.

Paul’s farewell to the Ephesian elders gives a picture of spiritual leadership. He taught with humility, endured trials, declared what was profitable, and did not shrink from proclaiming the whole counsel of God. He warned that destructive teachers would arise, even from among their own number. His charge was not to build personal followings but to care for the flock purchased by God (Acts 20:17–35).

Bible Conversations

- Why was Paul willing to spend so much time strengthening existing congregations rather than only entering new places? What does that

teach us about the difference between making converts and making disciples?

- Compare the instruction of Apollos with Paul's encounter with the disciples in Ephesus. Why does a clear understanding of Yeshua and the Gospel matter when teaching others?
- Paul warned the Ephesian elders to watch over themselves and the flock. What responsibilities do fathers, teachers, and church leaders have to know the Scriptures, recognize false teaching, and care for those entrusted to them?