The Temple Institute, an organization which has tasked itself with the construction of the Third Temple, has embarked on an ambitious project to recreate the altar of sacrifice . The Temple Institute celebrated Tisha B'Av, the anniversary on which both the First and Second Jewish Temples were destroyed, by laying the foundation stones for the altar. As it is currently forbidden for the Jewish people to build on the Temple Mount itself, the Temple Institute have decided to construct a smaller version of the altar of sacrifice, which can be transported to the site at a later date. Jewish rabbis took stones from the Dead Sea area, which should have never been tooled by man according to the Mosaic law, and laid them within a fenced area. They then poured a tar-like substance on top to bind the stones together. The Temple Institute have recreated many of the artefacts that will be used in the administration of the Temple. Two months ago, the Temple Institute announced they had just completed the manufacture of the golden censers , which are to be used by the priests in the administration of the temple. They have also manufactured the priestly garments , the High Priest's crown , the blue ephod , the golden menorah , and many other implements that will be used in the rebuilt temple. They are also working with the Sanhedrin on blueprints for the construction of the Third Temple, which according to their current calculations, should be built on the site presently occupied by the Dome of the Rock.

Quote: *"The Temple Institute has already built several of the Temple vessels such as the Ark and the menorah, and has now embarked on an ambitious project to build the altar, which will ultimately measure 3 meters wide by 3 meters long and 2 meters tall. During Thursday's ceremony, which took place in Mitzpe Yericho just east of Jerusalem, the Temple Institute laid the cornerstone for the altar and demonstrated how tar will be used to cement the stones together. The Institute plans on bringing the altar to its proper place on the Temple Mount when the Temple is rebuilt. "Today, Tisha B'av, is not just a time to mourn the destruction of the Temple," said Rabbi Yisrael Ariel, the head of the Temple Institute. "It is also a time to build."*

The Ark mentioned here is simply a mock-up constructed by the Temple Institute for research purposes. There is debate as to the real ark's exact location, if indeed it still exists today. Israeli scholars believe it could be located in a maze of tunnels beneath the Temple Mount. But Islamic control of the site has largely prevented any extensive archaeological work being carried out. Without the Ark the Jews cannot have a Temple, because in the Old Testament the Ark and the Mercy Seat upon it represented the very presence of God (Exodus 25:22). But the Scriptures indicate that following the regathering of the Jews to the land, that the nation of Israel would no longer regard the Ark of the Covenant (Jeremiah 3:16). I don't think Judaism has an answer as to why that will be. We Christians, however, know the reason why that might be so. True believers in the Messiah are now under the New Covenant, which is not written on tables of stone, but on our hearts through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Jeremiah 31:31-33). The Ark of the Covenant contained the manna, which sustained the children of Israel during their time in the wilderness. Jesus Christ is the true bread, the Bread of Life, which came down from heaven (John 6:32-35). He is that true bread which came down from heaven, which if a man eat, he shall live forever (John 6:48-51). The Ark also contained Aaron's rod that budded, which proved that he was the one chosen by God to stand before Him and intercede for the people (Numbers 17:10). We have one who is representing us in Heaven today, the Great High Priest, Jesus Christ the Righteous (Hebrews 4:14-16). Aaron was to sprinkle the blood of the sin offering before the Mercy Seat in order to obtain forgiveness for the people. But Jesus Christ has offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins, and has made our peace with God through the blood of His cross (Colossians 1:20). No wonder the Ark of the Covenant will not be visited when Israel turns to their Messiah for salvation. He is our Covenant (Isaiah 42:6).

A friend of mine sent me some verses relating to this latest development. According to the book of Ezra, there is a precedent for offering sacrifices upon the altar on the Temple Mount, even while the Temple itself has not yet been constructed.

Ezra 3:1-7
And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem. Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God. And they set the altar upon his bases; for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries: and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the LORD, even burnt offerings morning and evening. They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required; And afterward offered the continual burnt offering, both of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of the LORD that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a freewill offering unto the LORD. From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the LORD. But the foundation of the temple of the LORD was not yet laid.

Of course this would necessitate the cleansing of the site through the ashes of the red heifer, and the permission from the Israeli government to recommence the sacrificial system. The Bible seems to indicate that this could happen at the beginning of Daniel's 70th week, which commences the seven year rule of the Antichrist over the nation of Israel (Daniel 9:27). Revelation 11:2 indicates that a Temple will be constructed within the first three and a half years of the sacrifices being resumed, and that this will be the Temple that the Antichrist will subsequently defile (2nd Thessalonians 2:4). Whether this stone altar represents the beginning of the fulfilment of this particular prophecy, I couldn't say. But as you can see, a determined effort is being made by the Temple Institute and other organizations in Israel, to rebuild the Jewish Temple and restore its place in the nation. And that can only mean one thing, that the return of Christ is near. Are you under the blood of the New Covenant? Or are you trusting in something or someone which can never take away sins? Only Jesus Christ can forgive sins, because only He was sinless and only He gave His life for you upon the cross. Why don't you trust in Him for salvation today.

Isaiah 53:10-11
Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

Source Arutz 7 , Temple Institute