

TEMPLE INSTITUTE

A small minority of conservative Jews today would like to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. The Temple Institute is one effort that is making preparations in hope that some day this will become a reality.



Temple Institute (Jerusalem)

The first temple was finished by Solomon about 960 B.C. and later destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. The second was constructed by Zerubbabel, being completed in 516 B.C. after the Jews had returned from Babylonian captivity. This temple was reconstructed and the temple mount was doubled in size by Herod the Great, beginning about 20 B.C. While the main work was completed during his lifetime, the Jews continued to beautify and embellish the temple (Jn. 2:20) until near the time of its destruction in A.D. 70. If a new temple were built in modern times, it would be considered the third Jewish temple.



Golden Menorah Made by the Temple Institute

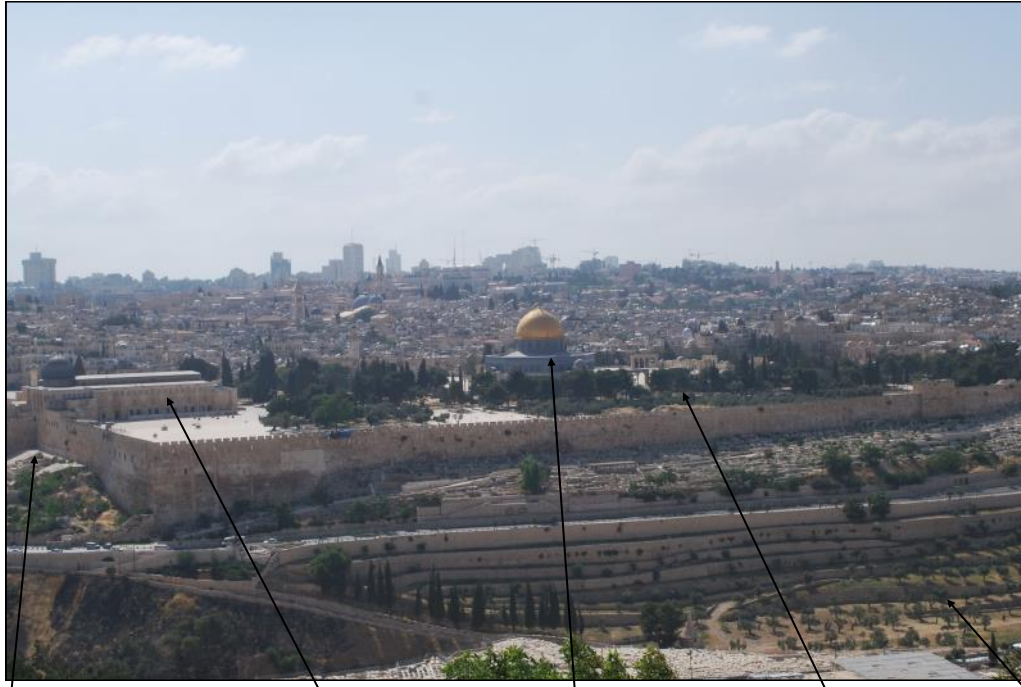
The Temple Institute has been constructing the sacred furniture and vessels to be used after the third temple is built—such as the golden lampstand. They have also been preparing clothing for the priests and the high priest.

This group has a full-time research staff, holds seminars, and produces educational material. It claims that 202 of the 613 commandments in the Torah (Law)—about a third—depend upon the presence of the temple (originally, the tabernacle). Conservative Jews believe that they are still bound by these laws, and they desire to obey them. They have, however, had difficulty finding a red heifer needed for purification rites once the temple is built (see Num. 19:1-22). (For more information, see their website at www.templeinstitute.org.)

The major obstacle to rebuilding the temple is that the temple mount has two Muslim shrines on it—the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. After the Jewish temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, a pagan temple was built on the site in the second century by the emperor Hadrian and dedicated to Jupiter. Centuries later, following the rise of Islam, the Muslims conquered Syria, and Jerusalem surrendered to the Rashidun Caliphate in A.D. 637. The Dome of the Rock was first completed in A.D. 691; it has been remodeled many times since then. The octagonal building was erected over the foundation stone, which may have been the same spot where the most holy place of the temple rested. Muslims believe this was the location where Mohammed ascended into heaven (Isra and Mi'raj).

For a time, during the Crusader period, the Dome of the Rock was taken over as a church building. However, Saladin recaptured it in 1187 and replaced its cross with a golden crescent. Israel took control of the temple mount during the Six Day War in 1967, but they sought to keep peace with Muslims. Some Jews want to remove the Dome of the Rock to build

a third temple, but these actions would result in great violence and bloodshed. The site is maintained by the Ministry of Awqaf, located in Amman, Jordan. Since 1967, non-Muslims have been granted limited access to the temple mount.



Southern Temple Steps Al-Aqsa Mosque Dome of the Rock Temple Mount Kidron Valley



Dome of the Rock



Al-Aqsa Mosque
(On the Temple Mount)



Men's Quran Study
(Between Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque)



Fountain for Washing Feet
(Before Entering Mosque)

The temple mount reveals a variety of attitudes concerning humanity's relationship with God. (1) Many secular Jews have no desire to rebuild the temple or reinstitute the sacrificial system. The idea of offering animals for sin is offensive to them. Some of these no longer even believe in God; they explain the establishment of the ancient Jewish nation in humanistic, rather than divine, terms. (2) Muslims, who control the mount today, believe that they can earn their way to God—that through prayer, almsgiving, and pilgrimages they can somehow merit their salvation. This mentality seriously underestimates the offensive nature of human sin in God's holy eyes. (3) Those Jews who want to rebuild the temple and reinstitute the sacrificial system recognize their need for atonement. However, they are blinded to the fact that God himself has offered the only sacrifice that can truly cleanse mankind from sin—his only unique Son (Jn. 3:16).

The writer of Hebrews eloquently argued that Jesus the Messiah is the superior high priest and sacrifice. While the blood of bulls and goats were offered year after year and reminded the people of their sins, Jesus was offered once for all time when he died on the cross. His shed blood offers full forgiveness and release from the bondage of sin (Heb. 9—10). Further, the sacrificial system of Judaism is obsolete. As Jeremiah had prophesied, there is a new covenant, with Jesus as the mediator and great high priest (Heb. 8). (It is indeed doubtful that a third temple will ever be built, and, even if it is, the animal sacrifices would possess no efficacy.) The answer to our sin problem is not the repeated slaughter of animals, but rather to trust and obey "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29).