

The Cross or The Lampstand?

By Roger Walkwitz

“A picture is worth a thousand words,” as the saying goes. A symbol or emblem is also a picture, and worth many words of explanation. I like to wear T-shirts that have a good message. Sometimes the message is in words, sometimes words and an emblem, and sometimes just an emblem. The same goes for my hats, which I always wear outside to protect my eyes. Some have emblems; some have words, like “Baguio City,” “Banaue,” or “Jerusalem,” favorite places that I like to advertise.

In ancient times, a cross in various forms and with a variety of meanings was used in almost all religions. In Egypt, a cross was used as a symbol of “Life.” In AD/CE 311, General Constantine supposedly saw a vision of a shield with a cross on it, with a message from the sky, “In this sign conquer!” Some Christians by this time had begun using a cross as their emblem, so Constantine declared Christianity a legal religion and adopted a cross as his emblem, thereby recruiting many Christians into his army. Soon he was able to defeat his rivals and became Emperor Constantine.

The earliest emblem discovered by archaeologists from the first Messianic Congregation of the Apostles in Jerusalem is a Menorah/Lampstand at the top with a fish hanging down, the base of the Menorah and the tail of the fish combining in the middle to make the Star of David. You will see this emblem on the cover of the *Israel Today* magazine. It was possibly 200 years after Yeshua before someone had the idea to use a cross for the developing Christianity. Why?

The message of the Apostles was the death, burial, and Resurrection of Yeshua The Messiah! We serve a Risen Savior! The Resurrection was the important point! Everyone dies, but no one had ever risen from the dead with a new body, a resurrection body, that could

appear and disappear. For a resurrection there had to be a death, of course, and Yeshua did die while on a cross. However, Yeshua dismissed His Spirit, no one killed Him! Yeshua proved He was the Son of God by being in control of His death and His Father in control of His resurrection, after which He appeared to many of His followers and taught them for 40 days on earth, before ascending bodily into the heavens in full view of His disciples. This is a powerful message!

As time went on, paganism infiltrated the Messianic Community through many Gentiles that made profession of faith in Yeshua but did not have the vitality of the resurrection message. Some began to think that they still had to pay for their sins, at least partly, as false teachers mixed pagan philosophy with Bible passages. Some willingly went to the arena to be killed by the lions in a false belief that that could atone for their sins. Others went into isolation from the world, becoming monks or hermits, in another false belief that self-denial could atone for sin. In this morbid development of death and death-to-self upon a false basis, the use of a cross, an instrument of death, became a likely emblem. Even when the Spanish conquered the Philippines, the cross was prominent as a weapon of subjection, not a symbol of life.

In contrast, the Lampstand throughout the Bible is used literally for light and symbolically for witness! The Bible never uses a cross to symbolize God’s people, but it is very clear in Revelation 1:20 that the Lampstand is God’s emblem or symbol for His Ekklesia, His Congregation. We, the members of His Family, are Lampstands, Light holders, while Yeshua Himself is the flame, The Light of the world! Part of being Torah-Observant is to symbolize ourselves as God does. Using the Menorah is a reminder that we are His witnesses.

Let us be accurate witnesses, letting His Light shine out from us wherever we go in the darkness of this present world system. 卍

