



### Another Way to Read Messiah :

## On the Problem of “Jesus as Christ” in the “Dispute between Zhao Zichen and Wu Leichuan”

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**Abstract:** In 1936, Zhao Zichen wrote an article criticizing Wu Leichuan’s portrayal of Jesus as the political king Messiah in the book *Christianity and Chinese Culture*. He believes that this is not in line with the facts contained in the *Bible*, but caters to current events and draws attachments to modern discourses, thus losing the stand and belief of Christianity itself. Although Wu Leichuan did not respond to Zhao Zichen’s criticism with a special article, he no longer mentioned Jesus as the political Messiah in his subsequent works, rather emphasized that the purpose of Jesus’ recognition of himself as the Messiah was to transform society and establish the kingdom of heaven on earth. Zhao Zichen’s theory of the kingdom of heaven is quite different from this. He not only opposes the Jewish eschatological theory of the kingdom of heaven, but also disapproves of Wu Leichuan’s theory of the material kingdom. Instead, he uniquely marks the “kingdom of heaven” as the realm of the mind. This article analyzes the dispute between Zhao and Wu on the issue of “Jesus is the Christ”, and argues that although the two hold different views on the eschatological kingdom, they are both forced to be in the “eschatological” situation at the time of the survival of the Chinese nation. They both deliver a modern Chinese interpretation of “Messiah” with national salvation as its basic agenda. In fact, Wu Leichuan’s understanding of the concept of “Messiah” is closer to the original text of the *Hebrew Bible* and the Jewish Rabbinic tradition, and his messianic vision of revolution is actually a radical proletarian revolution; while Zhao Zichen insists on spiritual and psychological construction. However, Zhao’s arguments about Jesus’ Messianic identity and purpose have lost the support of the *Bible*’s traditional apocalyptic theology and Judeo-Christian eschatology. Therefore, Zhao has never be able to interpret the ultimate goal of Jesus’ death successfully.

**Key Words:** Zhao Zichen, Wu Leichuan, Messiah, “Jesus is Christ”, Eschatology