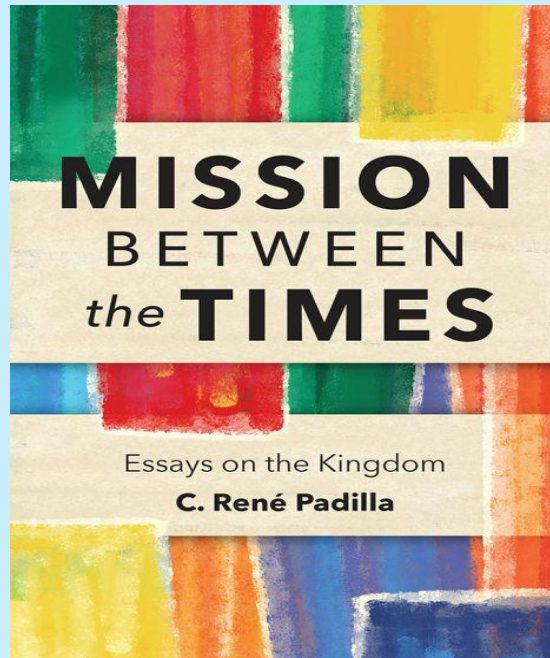




Kingdom Basics with C. René Padilla: A Reading Packet

LBHS READING QUESTIONS
CO-AUTHORED BY
ANGELA MARIE CARTAGENA & NATHAN LUIS CARTAGENA

An Orienting Word

This packet includes reading questions for five essays about the Kingdom of God by the renown Ecuadorian theologian C. René Padilla. All the essays except “A Message for the Whole Person” are in Padilla’s most widely read book *Mission between the Times: Essays on the Kingdom*.

“What is the Gospel?”

By C. René Padilla (1975)

General Reading Questions

1. What is this essay’s main claim? What is its primary aim (pp. 79-80)?
2. Let’s read between the lines with two questions: Why does Padilla start his essay by discussing the historical background of *euangelion* (pp. 80-81)? How does this discussion inform the rest of the essay?
3. According to Padilla, what is the relationship between the Gospel and the Kingdom of God/heaven (pp. 82-85)?
4. What is the church’s most ancient creed (p. 85)? How does this relate to Jesus’s proclamation of and invitation to the Kingdom of God?

5. Padilla writes: “The kingdom that Jesus brings is a realm of salvation, in which the blessings of the messianic age are available to the subjects in advance, a realm the people may enter now” (p. 89). What aspects of salvation—understood through the concept *shalom*, holistic peace—does Padilla discuss (pp. 90-94)?
6. Padilla writes: “Where there is no concrete repentance...there will be no salvation. Mental assent to the Lordship of Christ is insufficient for participation in the blessings of the kingdom made available through him. Jesus said “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven” (Matt 7:21)” (p. 96). What other passages support Padilla’s claims about the necessity of repentance for salvation? How does these passages and Padilla’s claim relate to the “truncated gospels” that Padilla critiqued during Lausanne 1 (see [The Lausanne website](#) for more details) (1974)?
7. Let’s relate Padilla’s essay to your theological education: What are some formulations or summaries of the gospel that you commonly hear or read? How do they relate to the criteria that Padilla provides?

Questions for further comprehension:

1. Padilla contends that “Jesus is the herald of a new era made present through his own action on behalf of the poor, the captive, the blind, and the oppressed” (p. 83) What is the significance of Jesus coming specifically to serve these groups? How have the churches and communities you have been a part of viewed and discussed these groups? How could they do better? In what areas and ways did they do a good job?
2. Padilla claims that “Jesus himself is shalom and that through his death he has brought all hostility among humans to an end” (p. 90). How do we interpret or understand this in light of the constant division among churches and denominations? How might we enact/live this out in our churches and communities?
3. Padilla affirms that “The Kingdom of God takes shape in the present in terms of righteous action, harmony with one another and joy in the Holy Spirit” (p. 93). How have you experienced this in your own life? If you haven't, why might that be? Did the churches you were a part of emphasize and/or teach on this? If so, in what contexts? How might churches do a better job communicating these truths?

“A Message for the Whole Person”

By C. René Padilla (1993)

General Reading Questions

1. Let's read beyond the lines. In our last reading, Padilla argued that “sacrificing for [Jesus'] sake is equivalent to sacrificing for the sake of the kingdom of God” (p. 87); “Good works done in love are not a mere addendum to salvation but part and parcel of the new creation realized in Jesus Christ (Eph 2:10; cf. Titus 2:14)” (p. 92); and “The kingdom of God, the resources of which have been placed at humanity's disposal through Jesus Christ, takes shape in the present in terms of righteous action (*dikaïosunē*), harmony with one another (*eirēnē*), and joy (*chara*) in the Holy Spirit (Rom 14: 7)” (pp. 92-93). How do these claims relate to today's essay?
2. What biblical text grounds and orients Padilla's argument? How does Padilla relate this passage to the claim that we don't need to define love to know, see, or experience it (p.1)?
3. Padilla argues that “As long as love is regard as a high ideal, everybody agrees with it. The difficulties arise when the question is the practice of love” (p. 1). Is this what you've experienced?

4. How does Padilla relate his guiding biblical passage to the Psalms (p.2)? How is this move evocative of our previous reading's argumentative structure?
5. Padilla endorses the claim that "The equal provision of basic rights requires unequal response to unequal needs. Justice must be partial in order to be impartial" (p. 2) How does this view relate to Acts 2:45 and Acts 4:23-37?
6. Let's read between the lines: How does Padilla conceive of the relationships between justice, love, and compassion (p. 3)?
7. Padilla argues that God has a special concern for the poor and needy and that Christians must share this concern. How do the biblical passages that bookend this essay support Padilla's argument (p. 1, 4)?

Questions for further Comprehension:

1. What are some of the current impediments to this way of loving and being with the poor? How might we remove or reduce these impediments?
2. Have you been a part of churches or communities that enacted this level of solidarity with the poor? If so, what did this look like? If not, what was the teaching focused on and how might you influence/encourage a return to living and serving the Kingdom of God in this way?

“New Testament Perspectives on a Simple Lifestyle”

By C. René Padilla (1980)

1. Let's read beyond the lines with two questions. First, why is Padilla discussing “New Testament perspectives on a simple lifestyle?” (See [here](#) for details.) Second, what themes does this essay repeat from our previous two Padilla readings?
2. What is Padilla's aim (p. 174)? What obstacles does he face to achieve his aim (pp.173-174)? What obstacles do we face in thinking with him?
3. Padilla argues that “Jesus' poverty is a hard historical fact unanimously portrayed in all four Gospels” (p. 174). What evidence does he provide to support this claim? What evidence does he use to contextualize it (p. 174-175)?

4. What three truths does Padilla believe we must remember when reflecting on Luke 6 and Matthew 5's teachings about the poor and the Kingdom of God (pp.176)?
5. Padilla writes: "According to his answer to John the Baptist, Jesus' concern for the poor, expressed in word and deed, is a sign that he [i.e., Jesus] is the Messiah" (p. 178). What question is Jesus answering? Why does this answer presume a distinctively Jewish context and meaning?
6. Padilla writes: "Jesus Christ is a crucified Messiah; his church is the church of the weak and the poor" (p. 182). How do Acts 2-4 support this claim (pp.182-183)?
7. What does *koinonia* mean (p. 183-184)? How is it usually translated and understood? How does its meaning alter the way you think about justice and life in the Kingdom of God?

Questions for further Comprehension:

1. Padilla states that “True contentment is possible only where both abundance and scarcity can be seen in the light of God’s purpose of love, contentment is the polar opposite of greed, and is intimately connected with sobriety and temperance” (p. 85). Have you seen the outworking of this in the churches you have attended? If so, in what context? If not, what was taught/lived out instead? Padilla also states that this is an essential qualification of leadership in the church. What might it look like for leaders to embody this kind of contentment?

2. In *The Myth of Normal*, Gabor Maté says that “Addiction is rooted in coping mechanisms,” and stresses that, in relation to addiction, we need to ask “What benefit is the addicted person getting? What trauma are they trying to escape? What are they trying to soothe?” (p. 211). How might trauma and addiction prevent people from gaining/experiencing contentment as Padilla defines it? How can the church walk alongside those who are struggling with this?

3. In reference to Acts and the New Testament epistles, Padilla writes states that “It is quite clear that concern for the poor was for the early Christians an essential aspect of the life and mission of the church. (pg. 183)” Is this currently true for churches in the United States? What evidence can you share to support your answer? What churches around the world are showing this to be an essential part of their mission? What does this look like? How might your church make this a priority if it is not already?

[illegible]

LBHS Shalom

"The Mission of the Church in Light of the Kingdom of God"

By C. René Padilla (1982/4)

- Let's read beyond the lines. What themes or methodologies from "What is the Gospel" does this essay repeat? What themes or methodologies from "A Message for the Whole Person" does this essay repeat?
- Why does Padilla argue that "Jesus' historical mission can be understood only in connection with the kingdom of God" (p.189)? How does Padilla define the kingdom of God (p. 189, 196)?
- How does Padilla conceive of the relationship between the kingdom of God and the church (pp. 190-192)? How does this vision relate to Padilla's understanding of Jesus' relationship to the kingdom of God (pp. 189, 191-193)?

Page 11 of 16

- LBHS Shalom*
- “The Mission of the Church in Light of the Kingdom of God”**
- By C. René Padilla (1982/4)**
1. Let's read beyond the lines. What themes or methodologies from “What is the Gospel” does this essay repeat? What themes or methodologies from “A Message for the Whole Person” does this essay repeat?
 2. Why does Padilla argue that “Jesus’ historical mission can be understood only in connection with the kingdom of God” (p.189)? How does Padilla define the kingdom of God (p. 189, 196)?
 3. How does Padilla conceive of the relationship between the kingdom of God and the church (pp. 190-192)? How does this vision relate to Padilla’s understanding of Jesus’ relationship to the kingdom of God (pp. 189, 191-193)?
- Page 11 of 16

4. Three times Padilla denies that the kingdom of God is equivalent to God's providence. Why does he reject this view (pp. 195-196)? Why does this rejection matter for our ability to understand Jesus and walk with the Spirit?
5. Padilla argues that "evangelism and social responsibility are inseparable" (p. 196)? Is this the majority view among your family or friends? The pastors or priests that you've had? The theologians that you've read?
6. How have Padilla's essays impacted your understanding of the Gospel, the Kingdom of God, and the Church?

Questions for greater comprehension:

1. Padilla stresses that in Jesus' life, message, and mission the Kingdom of God is already present. What are the signs that this is true? What benefits do members of the Kingdom have because of this? What could it look like if members of the Kingdom were able to fully live into this reality?

2. Why were Jesus' works of justice and mercy such an important part of his gospel ministry (pg. 189)? How might these works have affected the Jewish people who saw their present as being abandoned to the dominion of evil? How might they have affected those suffering under the oppression of the Roman Empire? In light of this, how could the church change/improve its interactions with Jewish and non Jewish members of the Kingdom suffering under oppressive empires now?

3. Padilla claims that, "Pentecost meant power for a new lifestyle including a new economy (pg. 192). The mission of the church: manifestation of the Kingdom of God through proclamation, social service, and action." Is your church manifesting these three things? If so, in what context? How are you/your church 'through good works making the Kingdom visible as an historical present reality? How could the church as a whole do this better? What can we learn from sister churches throughout the world and throughout history?

“Christ and Antichrist in the Proclamation of the Gospel”

By C. René Padilla (1979)

1. Let's read beyond the lines with a personal question: Have you formally studied New Testament teachings about the Antichrist? Are you surprised that we are?
2. Let's read beyond the lines again: How does this essay mirror Padilla's writings on the Gospel and the kingdom of God?
3. What six conclusions does Padilla draw from his exegesis of NT texts about the antichrist (pp.129-130)?

4. How does Padilla conceive of the relationships between materialism, consumerism, the myth of progress, the rational attitude, advanced societies, modern technology, and the spirit of the antichrist (pp.130-134)?
5. What two ways does the Antichrist oppose the Good News and the kingdom of God (p.133)?
6. Padilla endorses Jacques Ellul's claim that "A state is insecure unless there is a state religion. Politics demands religion as an ally" (p.134). How do current U.S. politics support this claim?

Questions for greater comprehension:

1. On page 123, Padilla discusses false prophets and false christs performing signs and wonders in order to lead astray. Have you encountered this aspect of the anti-kingdom in any of the teachings on the end times you have heard? If not, why do you think it might have been left out? If so, in what context?

2. Padilla contends that “all the work of the anti-christ is a parody of the work of Jesus” (pp. 124-125). If Christ’s ministry was primarily aimed at the poor, the captive, the blind, and the oppressed with a focus on justice and mercy what might we be able to conclude about the work of the anti-christ?

3. Padilla claims that “It is the last hour, evidenced by the appearance of many anti-christs (forerunners), adversaries of Christ who are attacking the gospel” (p. 126). Have you received any instruction on looking out for false teachers who propagate false gospels? If so, how might this kind of teaching prevent us from joining leaders who are actively working against the Kingdom of God? Have you experienced sitting under pastors, priests, or leaders that desire worship and celebrity and who preach/teach a distorted Christ, gospel, and/or Kingdom? If so, what kind of harm has this caused in your life, the life of those around you, and in the life of the church?