Title: THE BATTLE FOR YOUR LOYALTY, LUKE 17:20 – 37.
(Chatham, NJ; 10/17/10, AM) [D – Topical]

Theme: The Kingdom of God rules within the human heart and rivals all worldly kingdoms.

Purpose: To assert that God rules within the hearts and minds of its adherents, and to contrast some of its means of fighting with those of other kingdoms.

Introduction:

1. Establishing the Kingdom of God has been a long-standing purpose of God.
2. From the conquest of Canaan to David's throne to prophetic expectations, the setting up the rule of God on earth has been the focus of Israel.
3. The dream of Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled in the life of Christ, Mark 1:15.
4. Jesus' words in Luke 17 sound out a warning and provide insight as to the nature of this Kingdom.

I. The Kingdom of God Rivals All Worldly Kingdoms.

A. Herod knew it.
    1. He sought to destroy his rival, Mt. 2.
    2. A later Herod sought to elevate himself and paid dearly, Acts 12.
    3. Like Saul, the first king of Israel, kings don't relinquish power easily.

B. Dostoevsky knew it.
    1. In the Brothers Karamazov he notes through one of the characters that the Socialists seek to institute an earthly, utopian kingdom.
    2. This was several decades before Communism took over Russia and failed miserably to establish such a utopia.

C. Islam is a rival kingdom.
    1. Note the words of the Muslim Brotherhood in Spencer's article.
    2. They use the very teachings of Islam to justify their actions.
    3. Recent terrorist attempts also justify their deeds by referring to Islamic teachings.
    4. Faisal Shahzad, the Times Square bomber, said at his sentencing that if he had 1,000 lives to give for the cause of Islam he would give them all.
    5. There are entirely too many such incidents to consider these to be isolated.
    6. Islam has a history of violent overthrow of whole nations.
    7. Why do Muslim nations consider it punishable by death to convert to Christianity?

D. Che Guevara
    1. I vividly remember one of the people who smirked at me when I was converted by laughing that I had "seen the light." He was wearing a picture of Che.
    2. This man dedicated his life to violent overthrow of his enemies. He tortured them, and by his own admission liked killing people.
    3. He had an office with an open window looking over the place where the Castro regime shot his enemies after the Cuban revolution.
    4. Why do people love this guy and the kingdom he represents?
    5. They are participants in a kingdom ruled by thugs.

II. The Rule of God, Luke 17.

A. A Kingdom without boundaries.
    1. "In your midst" or "within you" (Luke 17:21)
    2. "Within you" means an inner spiritual reality.
    3. "In your midst" sees the Kingdom as present in the person and ministry of Jesus.

4. Both make sense to some degree, and the context suggests a further dynamic that the Kingdom has already broken in.
5. The signs the Jews looked for (20) were insufficient to recognize it.
6. Verses 22ff. suggest that many people have not observed what God has done to establish it and will miss it as a result.
7. Don't follow the crowd, 23, 26-27, 28-30.

B. The Kingdom of God transcends national boundaries.
    1. God uses nations and groups to lead people to him, Acts 17:26-27.
    2. Countries are not necessarily evil although they can be.
    3. Some countries oppose Christianity. This is because, like Herod, they instinctively recognize a threat to their totalitarian impulses.
    4. The rule of God conquers the human heart and manifests itself in virtuous Kingdom living and a determined loyalty to God.

III. We Wage War with the World.

A. Not an armed insurrection.
    1. Peter was rebuked for cutting off someone's ear in an attempt to put up resistance, John 18:10-11.
    2. Paul violently tried to stop the church but reformed his ways.
    3. For all of its mistakes the church does things to heal and help: many journalists had to admit that it was the churches that helped during and after Katrina.

B. Our weapons seek to change human rebellion.
    1. We have a different Lord, one who was crucified for redemption.
    2. We have truth on our side: the only true God, the truth about the world, and the truth that sets free.
    3. We have true morality and virtue.
    4. We destroy everything that sets itself up against God, 2 Corinthians 10:3-5.

Conclusion:
1. The Kingdom of God has come.
2. It appeals to all human rebels to turn back to God before it is too late.
3. The fulfillment of the Kingdom occurs after you pass through the door of death.
4. But if you wait until then you'll miss it.
5. It is here now in the reign of Christ on earth.
6. You need only to believe in him, be baptized for the removal of you rebellion and sin, and live according to the dictates of the Kingdom.
7. Where is your loyalty today?