

# FOR THE LOVE OF GOD + -

## THE HUNT FOR HERETICS: THE SPANISH INQUISITION

This segment comes from **EPISODE 1: WAR + PEACE**.

From Jesus' command to "love your enemies" to the idea of "holy war" is a giant leap. Yet from the Old Testament through to the Crusades and the inquisitions, Christian history is full of violence. Has Christianity been a major contributor to war? How have the followers of a crucified leader managed to get things so wrong? This segment takes a look at one of the most notorious episodes of Christian history: the Spanish Inquisition.



### THEME QUESTION

Place a mark on this line to show to what extent you agree with the following statement: "Christians tolerate and respect other points of view."



Disagree



Agree



### ENGAGE

1.



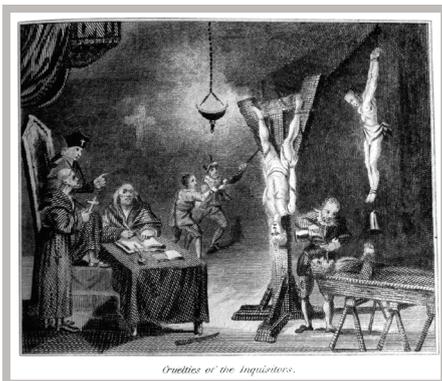
- a. Have you ever been punished for something you didn't do, or that you did but didn't believe was wrong? How did you feel?
- b. Have you ever argued with someone about their beliefs? What were you trying to achieve?

2. Read Articles 18 and 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and answer the questions that follow:

**ARTICLE 18:** "EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, CONSCIENCE AND RELIGION; THIS RIGHT INCLUDES FREEDOM TO CHANGE HIS RELIGION OR BELIEF, AND FREEDOM, EITHER ALONE OR IN COMMUNITY WITH OTHERS AND IN PUBLIC OR PRIVATE, TO MANIFEST HIS RELIGION OR BELIEF IN TEACHING, PRACTICE, WORSHIP AND OBSERVANCE."

**ARTICLE 19:** "EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION; THIS RIGHT INCLUDES FREEDOM TO HOLD OPINIONS WITHOUT INTERFERENCE AND TO SEEK, RECEIVE AND IMPART INFORMATION AND IDEAS THROUGH ANY MEDIA AND REGARDLESS OF FRONTIERS."

- Why do you think these articles were included in the UDHR?
  - How important do you think the rights to freedom of belief and expression are?
  - Should there be any limits to these freedoms?
  - Can you think of any modern examples that you have heard about where these rights have been denied?
3. Write your definition of the word "heresy". Why do you think heresy might be a big deal to some religious groups?
4. What observations can you make about the following images depicting **the Spanish Inquisition**?



## UNDERSTAND AND EVALUATE



**WATCH the segment: “The hunt for heretics: The Spanish Inquisition”**  
([cpx.video/inquisitions](https://cpx.video/inquisitions))

1. Why were *Conversos* resented in Spain in the 1400s?
2. How were charges brought against the *Conversos*? What kind of evidence was required?
3. What does this quote from Pope Sixtus IV tell us about the motivations of many of the inquisitors?

"The Inquisition for some time has been moved not by zeal for the faith and the salvation of souls, but by lust for wealth. And many true and faithful Christians, on the testimony of enemies and rivals have, without any legitimate proof, been thrust into secular prisons, tortured and condemned as relapsed heretics, deprived of their goods and property, and handed over to the secular arm to be executed, causing disgust to many."

4. What are some of the misconceptions about torture in the Spanish Inquisition that are clarified in this segment?
5. Imagine you were part of a crowd watching an *auto-da-fé*. Write a blog post describing what happened and how you felt.
6. Simon Smart quotes a legal expert at time of the Inquisition who wrote of the *auto-da-fé*: “The goal was the education of one and all – and also, to terrify.” What do you think he meant by this? Why would the Inquisitors want to terrify the crowd?
7. Articles sometimes appear citing the “millions” killed in the Spanish Inquisition, but expert scholars now estimate that approximately 6000 people were killed, over a 350-year period. To what extent should this influence how we see the Inquisition? Do the numbers matter?
8. Read the quote on the following page from Bishop Wazo, and answer the questions that follow:
  - a. Explain what Wazo is saying in your own words.
  - b. How do you think the Inquisitors could claim to be following a God of charity, forgiveness, and compassion while condemning “heretics” to death?

“IF THE CHURCH SEEKS TO DESTROY THE HUMAN BEINGS THAT GOD CREATED,  
AND CONDEMN THOSE THAT HE REDEEMED, IT WITHHOLDS FROM HUMAN BEINGS  
THE CHARITY AND FORGIVENESS THAT GOD HIMSELF HAD SHOWN THEM.”

## BIBLE FOCUS

**READ Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43.**

1. What do the following elements in this parable represent?
  - a. The owner of the field
  - b. The enemy
  - c. The wheat
  - d. The weeds
  - e. The servants
2. How does the owner respond when the servants ask whether they should pull up the weeds? What reason does he give?
3. Is there anything in this story that you find distressing or offensive? If so, why?
4. What lessons might this parable teach us about how to respond to people whose beliefs we strongly disagree with?

**READ John 18:1-19:16.**

1. In another place, Bishop Wazo pointed out that Jesus, “mild and humble of heart”, preferred to suffer abuse and shameful treatment and even death rather than do violence to others. How is this evident in this account of Jesus’ arrest and “trial”?
2. What parallels can you see, if any, between the actions of the Jewish leaders and Pilate, and those of the Inquisitors?

## **APPLY**

1. Christine Caldwell Ames, from the University of South Carolina, says: “There are certain beliefs that we do find to be generally insupportable in the modern West - a rejection of diversity, for example ... These are things where certainly there’s a community interest in maintaining these and encouraging them, and so I think it’s fair to say that in different communities one might be able to identify heresy. It’s not a religious heresy - it might be a social heresy - but it is something that seems to be insupportable and something that is not to be encouraged.”
  - a. Can you think of any “social heresies” of our time - beliefs that are unacceptable within our culture? Do they make you uncomfortable?
  - b. Read [this article \(cpx.video/shaming\)](#) in *The New York Times* about public shaming in the internet age. What parallels can you see with what happened in the Spanish Inquisition? What differences are there?
  - c. Have you personally seen ways that social media can be used to silence unacceptable beliefs? Do you think it could be used instead to foster open debate and respect for other points of view?
2. Plan a week-long social media campaign to encourage honesty, tolerance, and compassion towards everyone in your school or community, regardless of their beliefs. Include at least two Facebook posts, two Instagram posts, and two tweets.

## **EXTEND**

1. Choose one of the fictional representations of the Spanish Inquisition listed below. Write a one-page reflection on how the Inquisition is portrayed in the example you have chosen, including how historically accurate you believe it to be, and what message is being conveyed by the reference to the Inquisition.
  - a. Edgar Allan Poe’s short story, “The Pit and the Pendulum”
  - b. Monty Python’s “The Spanish Inquisition” sketches
  - c. Mel Brooks’ movie “History of the World, Part 1”
  - d. The 2016 “Assassin’s Creed” movie
2. Watch the segment: “[Witches: Fear and loathing in Salem](#)” ([cpx.video/witches](#)). Make a list of some of the parallels between the Spanish Inquisition and the Salem Witch Hunts.