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OMNIS



Ancient ideas of the gods ascribed different powers to different gods. In Judaism, and later in Christianity and Islam, the idea of One God, with all power, knowledge, presence and love emerged.

Which religions and beliefs?

- Jewish people
- Christians
- Muslims

Key Questions:

- If there was a god, what would the god be able to do?
- The ancient gods of Egypt, Greece and Rome are not worshipped today. Why not?
- How would an atheist respond to these four philosophical ideas about God?

Clip available here:
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/religious-education-ks3-a-z-of-religion-and-beliefs-0-is-for-omnis-power-of-god/zjgv47h>

What's it all about?

Four big words and ideas about God.

The clip begins by asking students to consider ideas of ancient gods and goddesses: superhuman in powers, but often a bit wild in their behaviour. Something over 3000 years ago, the Hebrew people – ancestors of today's Jewish religion – were developing the idea that if God is, then God is One. The One God would – it seemed logical – have all powers: seeing everything, knowing everything, being everywhere at once and having all powers. The philosophical terms for these qualities or 'attributes' are:
 Omnipotent = all-powerful
 Omniscient = all-knowing
 Omnipresent = everywhere.

This Jewish vision of One Supreme God passed on, after centuries, to the Christians and after more centuries to the Muslims:

Muslim scripture: "To Allah belongs the east and the west."

Christians: "Even the hairs of our head are numbered."

The word 'Omni' means 'All'. A fourth 'omni' - Omnibenevolent – matters as well. Religions teach that God is good. Completely good.

This concept of God has superseded the old gods and goddesses of ancient Greeks, Romans and Egyptians: today maybe over 4 billion people believe in one God, all powerful, all seeing, all loving and present in all places.

Do note that in under three minutes this little clip raises many issues that need more classroom exploration, and students need time to explore ideas in more depth. Particularly, this clip conflates a thousand years of the history of theology rather quickly: Jewish, Christian and Muslim theologians have much more to say. And also, Sikhs and Hindus hold teachings about the supremacy of the divine, which are not examined here, but are both similar and different to the 'religions of the Book', as Judaism, Christianity and Islam are sometimes called.

Classroom or homework task:

Split a page into four and head each quadrant with one of the 'Omni~' words. For each of the words, in its section, A] Give a definition. B] Explain why this idea is important to religious people today. C] Formulate two questions you would like to ask in this format: 'If God is omni~, then why...'

Suggested outcomes: students can...

- Give an informed account of the four attributes or features of God introduced in the clip
- Handle information and ideas effectively by raising and responding to key questions about the nature of God

