



# SCRIPTURE AND SCIENCE

Planetarium show on biblical star shines for retired teacher

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**C**OULD it have been a comet, streaking across Palestine's skies? Or maybe a memorable meteor?

Or is there any firm explanation for the biblical accounts of the star of Bethlehem heralding the birth of Jesus of Nazareth?

Bob Kasting is comfortable with questions. He served as a Columbus East High School physics teacher for 40 years and chairman of the school's science department for 20 years before his recent retirement.

Plus, he is accustomed to examining his Christian faith.

He hopes believers and nonbelievers alike will make time for a 22-minute presentation, "The Star of Bethlehem," beginning at 8 p.m. Monday and running at various times through New Year's Day at East's 60-seat Loren S. Noblitt Planetarium, Indiana Avenue and Marr Road.

"I wanted to present a Christmas show," said Kasting, 72, who coordinates presentations for the public on a volunteer basis. "But I didn't want a cartoon. And I didn't want to totally rewrite history."

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**From top:** Stars twirl above Bob Kasting in the Loren S. Noblitt Planetarium at Columbus East High School. The retired chairman of the school's science department will present "The Star of Bethlehem," a blend of Scripture and science. Screengrabs from the show detail what pilgrims to Jesus Christ's birth site might have seen. **ANDREW LAKER** | THE REPUBLIC; SUBMITTED PHOTOS

The presentation from The Eugenides Foundation, based in Athens, Greece, is one among several during the two-week holiday period, including "Laser Winter Holiday," and musical, laser light shows of The Beatles, Pink Floyd and U2.

He first presented the Bethlehem show last year and nearly sold out each show, attracting about 600 people.

He hopes for the same response this time.

Other than a brief, basic scientific intro that Kasting leads, the show stands on its own at the facility that was remodeled after the 2008 flood. Highlights include ethereal music and wordless vocals that heightens a sense of wonder, and creative effects such as stars that drop from the sky and

morph into snowflakes at one point.

"I thought it was well done," said Columbus' Steve Pletcher, who attended with his family and other local families. "I was pleased to see that kind of expertise."

"It's always good to learn something new," said East principal Mark Newell, who saw the show.

Perhaps the only element

that might draw mild criticism is that "Star" is heavy on IMAX-sized animation and misty, biblical-era scenery and light on actual stars.

A similar show presented a few years ago at The Children's Museum of Indianapolis planetarium presented several versions of what the nighttime sky over Bethlehem might have looked like in about 5 B.C., largely believed

by many scholars as the time of Jesus' birth.

"I understand that there are some religious people who are skittish about science," Kasting said. "They think that science somehow disproves their spiritual beliefs. But I don't believe you go to a science lab for answers on spiritual issues. And I don't believe you use a thermometer to measure someone's spirituality."

"Plus, I don't believe one automatically denies the other."

Kasting especially likes the idea that the presentation is restrained and leaves possible answers open-ended. There is no gospel according to one scientific theory.

"It's fair and it doesn't push," Kasting said. "It simply presents a mix of history and science and lets the observer interpret."