

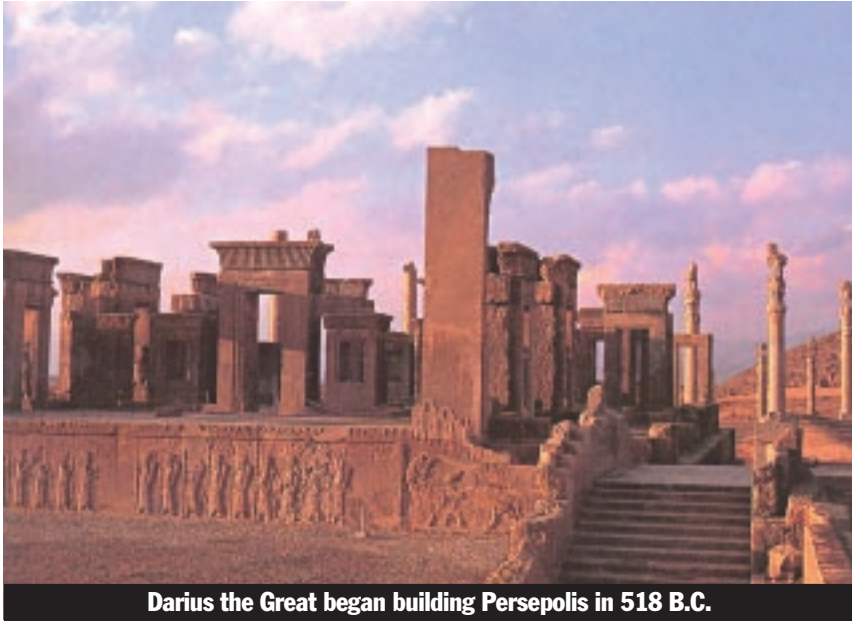
broadcasting, and in what people were allowed to say under “freedom of speech.” At the same time, he found that

thinking at least. I couldn’t see why sin had come in, or why a God of love would send people to hell. And while

of what it meant to be saved, though some of my friends spoke about it.”

Pooyan’s new friends invited him to church, and he began attending a thousand-member Charismatic fellowship in Sheffield with both Anglican and Baptist Union influences. Pooyan found that much of what was practiced in the church resembled secular entertainment more than spiritual worship. There was much talk about the Christian faith, but there appeared to be little substance, certainly not enough to satisfy an enquiring young mind. He attended an Alpha Course, which offered the opportunity to ask questions, but little more.

“I was always asking questions,” Pooyan admits. “But often they were not answered. I went right through the whole course, but my problems remained. At the end, we were given a piece of paper with a prayer written on. We were told



**Darius the Great began building Persepolis in 518 B.C.**

people were cold and distant, attitudes very foreign to someone raised in a warm, friendly Eastern society.

Sixth-form college found Pooyan studying for A levels in mathematics, biology, and computer studies and making new friends. The religious education classes of high school, with their emphasis on comparative religions and Christianity from an Anglican (Episcopalian) perspective, were left behind, and he met a number of genuine believers. Some of these believers were from Charismatic churches, and while Pooyan is now able to see that they had very little grasp of doctrine, he remembers them encouraging him at a critical time in his life.

“They befriended me. They showed an interest in me. I enjoyed the discussions about life and its meaning. They spoke to me of a God who could be known, a God who forgives sin, a God who is revealed in His Son, Jesus Christ. I didn’t believe it all, then. Indeed, I mocked them. But I was



**The Tomb of Cyrus the Great, who founded the Persian Empire around 550 B.C.**

my friends lived moral lives and spoke of what they believed, I saw so many who professed Christianity, but did as they pleased. It seemed too easy, as if it made no difference to them. I had yet to learn the distinction between nominal and real Christianity. I had no concept

that if we repeated the prayer, we would be Christians. I couldn’t see the difference between that and Islam, where a simple statement of commitment to Allah and Mohammed is all that is needed. However, during the course, one of the pastors gave me a Bible, the

first time I had one, and that was to change my life.”

Advised to begin reading the Gospel of John, Pooyan resolved instead to begin at the beginning with Genesis because he wanted to know “how it all began.” Meanwhile, his parents were becoming concerned about his commitment to Christian meetings. His father felt Pooyan had been unduly influenced by others, but figured that it was all a teenage phase and would pass.

But Pooyan continued to study, reading his Bible at night, and keeping it hidden at other times.

“My mind was being renewed, as the catechism says. I came to see a God so different to the one presented in Zoroastrianism or Islam. When I came to John’s Gospel, the light really dawned. So many of my questions were answered. I understood from Christ’s interviews with Nicodemus that religion was not enough, and I was brought to see that only Christ can save from John 14:6. What a blow for my pride and self-righteousness that was! But at last I came to rest finally in Christ and in God’s mercy. There was no going back—I must look to Him! In the months that followed, the book of Romans was so helpful to me, bringing assurance to my soul.”

Pooyan went on to Teeside University, Middlesborough, to study computer science. There he sought Christian fellowship and again associated for some time with a Charismatic fellowship. But he became disillusioned with many of their man-made and man-centred activities. There were plenty of heightened emotions and faintings (called being “slain in the spirit” by its advocates) brought on by prolonged standing and singing, but there was no attempt to teach the word of God, and the appetite of the young Christian was not satisfied.

Pooyan continued to search. Churches that were Anglican, Baptist Union, Salvation Army (the last seemed a possibility until joint ventures with Roman Catholicism were introduced)—he tried them all but with little profit.

Pooyan’s university course required him to spend a year working in his field, and he found himself in Ipswich in the employ of British Telecom. Again he searched for Christian fellowship and finally settled in an open Brethren assembly. The gospel was preached there, and Pooyan was encouraged to become involved in the church. He soon benefited from teaching on doctrine and Christian living. Here, too, he made his first efforts to preach, feeling the leading of the Lord in this matter. Of particular encouragement was the friendship of Dr. David Allen, deputation secretary of the Trinitarian Bible Society, who confirmed his young friend in the merits of the Authorized Version of the Bible he had come to love and who gave helpful suggestions as to what he might read.

All too quickly the year at Ipswich ended, and Pooyan returned to the Northeast to complete his studies. He finally found a church where he could take membership, and he became associated with the Presbyterian Reformed Church, Stockton-on-Tees.

“I may not agree with the church’s position on every issue,” Pooyan comments, “but I was immediately impressed by the sound preaching of Christ, sincere commitment, and evangelistic zeal. The church is firmly A.V. and not ecumenical in any way, and it was a blessing to me.”

One other legacy of Pooyan’s time at Teeside must not be overlooked. It was there in the Christian Union that he met the young English girl who was to become his wife. Becky and Pooyan were married in May 2002 in Sheffield.

His time at university finished, Pooyan was convinced that he should prepare for the gospel ministry, and in September 2003 he enrolled as an independent student at the Whitefield College of the Bible in Northern Ireland. He does not know what the future holds, but envisages some form of work in England where there are thousands of Iranian asylum-seekers. It is perhaps the best way he can fulfil his desire to reach his own countrymen with the gospel while the door to Iran remains firmly closed for missionaries. Meanwhile, he studies and gives some help to the Trinitarian Bible Society as it seeks to produce a much-needed revised translation of the Bible in Farsi, the official language of Iran.



Pooyan and Becky

Pray for Pooyan and Becky, that the Lord might continue to prepare them for the work He will open to them. Pray also for Pooyan’s family—members of his immediate family are less hostile than at first, but to date he remains the sole member of the family to have been converted to Christ. ■