Election and Foreknowledge

The biblical word “foreknowledge” is often used in connection with election. Both Peter and Paul say that foreknowledge is connected to our election.

1 Peter 1:1-2 - 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, **who are chosen 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father**, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure. NASB

Romans 8:28-30 - 28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose; 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; 30 and whom He predestined, these He also called: and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. NASB

Occasionally someone will suggest that God's election is based on His “foreknowledge” of who will believe. This view suggests that God simply looks into the future to see who will believe, and He chooses those whom He sees choosing Him. If divine foreknowledge simply means God's knowledge of what will happen in advance, then this view may seem correct. But that is not the biblical meaning of "foreknowledge." [Gk. – *prognosis*] John MacArthur speaks of this......

"When the Bible speaks of God's foreknowledge, it refers to God's establishment of a love relationship with that person. The word "know," in both the Old and New Testament, refers to much more than mere cognitive knowledge of a person. Such passages as Hosea 13:4-5; Amos 3:2 (KJV); and Romans 11:2 clearly indicate this. For example, 1 Peter 1:20 says Christ was "foreknown before the foundation of the world." Surely this means more than that God the Father looked into the future to behold Christ! It means He had an eternal, loving relationship with Him. The same is true of the elect, whom we are told God "foreknew" (Romans 8:29). That means He knew them--he loved them--before the foundation of the world.”

Hosea 13:4-5 - 4 Yet I have been the LORD your God Since the land of Egypt; And you were not to know any god except Me. 5 I cared for you in the wilderness, In the land of drought. NASB

Amos 3:2 - 2 "You only have I known among all the families of the earth; Therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities." NASB

Romans 11:2 - 2 God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?” NASB

As a matter of fact, consider that in the same context of 1 Peter chapter 1, Peter speaks of our election being “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father” (v-2) and also speaks of Christ being “foreknown before the foundation of the world” (v-20). But consider that elsewhere in the New Testament where Christ’s election as Savior and foreknowledge of His cross are mentioned, that is said to be “by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God.” Here foreknowledge has a much fuller meaning than just “a prior knowledge”, but rather a predetermined plan in which Christ is “foreknown,” that is, “chosen, elect, planned to be the one” by God. Further, Acts 4:27 says that His cross was predestined by God to occur. In these contexts consider that foreknowledge is the very **DECREES AND FOREORDINATION** of God.

Acts 2:23 - 23 this Man, **delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God**, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. NASB

Acts 4:27-28 - 27 "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur." NASB

Therefore when we speak of the biblical word “foreknowledge” we see that it has a much fuller sense than just prior knowledge. Consider these words from Zodiates NT Word Study......
proginôskœ; fut. prognôsmaï, 2 d aor. proégnœn, from pró (4253), before, and ginôskœ (1097), to
know. To perceive or recognize beforehand, know previously, take into account or specially consider
beforehand, to grant prior acknowledgement or recognition to someone, to foreknow.
(I) Used of mere prescience, to know before (Acts 26:5; 2 Peter 3:17).
(II) Used of God’s eternal counsel it includes all that He has considered and purposed to do prior to
human history. In the language of Scripture, something foreknown is not simply that which God was
aware of prior to a certain point. Rather, it is presented as that which God gave prior consent to, that which
received His favorable or special recognition. Hence, this term is reserved for those matters which God
favorably, deliberately and freely chose and ordained.
(A) Used of persons, to foreknow with approbation, to foreapprove or make a previous choice of, as
special people (Rom 8:29; 11:2).
(B) Used of events, to previously decide or plan, to foreknow for God is to foreordain 1 Peter 1:19,20
presents Christ as the "Lamb of God foreknown from the foundation of the world" (a.t.). He is said to be
foreknown because God had planned and determined in His eternal counsel to provide His Son as a
sacrifice for His people. Certainly more is meant than that God knew ahead of time that Christ would so
come and die. God's foreknowledge is given here as the cause for His Son's sacrifice — because He
planned and decreed it.
(C) In Rom 8:29, in relation to believers, proginôskœ occurs with the verb proôrise, aor. act. indic. of
proorízœ (4309), to predestinate. Foreknowledge and foreordination are logically coordinate. The
former emphasizes the exercise of God's wisdom and intelligence in regard to His eternal purpose and the
latter emphasizes the exercise of God's will in regard to it. What He has decreed is what He has decided.
This foreknowledge and foreordination in the Scripture are always unto salvation and not unto perdition.
Therefore, it should be said that the Lord never foreordains someone to be lost. Rather, He foreordains
unto salvation those whom He specially considered and chose in eternity past (see Matt 7:23; John
10:14; Rom 11:2; 1 Cor 8:3; Gal 4:9; 2 Tim 2:19; Sept.: Hos 13:5; Amos 3:2). Any thought of the lost
being appointed or ordained unto condemnation should be understood as an act of passing over in which
the lost are permitted to suffer the consequences of their choice of sin (1 Peter 2:8). The salvation of every
believer is known and determined in the mind of God before its realization in time. Thus, proginôskœ
corresponds with the idea of having been chosen (eklégomai [1586], to choose) before the foundation
of the world mentioned in Eph 1:4 and logically precedes the action indicated by prooríze. Proginôskœ essentially entails a gracious self-determining on God's part from eternity to extend
fellowship with Himself to undeserving sinners (Rom 8:29).

Election is a theme in God’s plan and appears throughout the Bible
The doctrine of election is not just a New Testament reality, but does in fact appear throughout the Scripture as it characterizes the way God deals with man. Consider this brief definition of election from the Nelson’s Bible Dictionary…… ELECTION - The
graceful and free act of God by which He calls those who become part of His kingdom and special
beneficiaries of His love and blessings. The Bible describes the concept of election in three distinct ways.
Election sometimes refers to the election of Israel and the church as a people for special service and
privileges. Election may also refer to the election of a specific individual to some office or to perform some
special service. Still other passages of the Bible refer to the election of individuals to be children of God
and heirs of eternal life. (from Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986)

Election therefore, is a method of God for selecting specific individuals for His own
purposes, and usually provides special services that they will perform and bestows upon
them special privileges of which they alone are the beneficiaries.

God chose Noah to build and ark out of gopher wood so that he and his family could be
saved from the flood, when the entire population of the whole earth was to be destroyed
by God, and also possessed a faith that became for him and his family eternal salvation.
Hebrews 11:7 - 7 By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence
prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became
an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. NASB
God chose Abraham from among the Gentiles in Chaldea to bring Him into the Land of Canaan, and to be the ancestor of Christ, and a "father of many nations," through whom "all the families of the earth would be blessed."

Genesis 12:1-3 - Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; 2 And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing: 3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." NASB

Nehemiah 9:7 - "Thou art the LORD God, Who chose Abram And brought him out from Ur of the Chaldees, And gave him the name Abraham. NASB

Joshua 24:2 - 2 And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods. NASB

God chose Moses to be the deliverer of Israel from the cruel labor of Pharaoh.

Exodus 3:10 - 10 Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt." NASB

God chose Israel to be delivered from the cruel labor of Pharaoh, in order show them His mighty deeds in delivering them, and to bestow upon them the special privileges of His covenant relationship with them, and to even make them recipients of eternal life through Christ and heirs of the Gospel. Consider that in the calling of Israel out of Egypt, they were given the specific privilege of bringing forth the Word of God and also the Messiah Himself.

Deuteronomy 7:6-8 - 6 "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. 7 The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8 but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. NASB

Isaiah 41:8-9 - "But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, Descendant of Abraham My friend, 9 You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, And called from its remotest parts, And said to you, 'You are My servant, I have chosen you and not rejected you. NASB.

Isaiah 44:1-3 - "But now listen, O Jacob, My servant; And Israel, whom I have chosen: 2 Thus says the LORD who made you And formed you from the womb, who will help you,' Do not fear, O Jacob My servant; And you Jeshurun whom I have chosen. 3 For I will pour out water on the thirsty land And streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring, And My blessing on your descendants. NASB

Consider in the election of Israel by God, just a few of the following special privileges and services to which they were appointed by God. (Rom 9:3-5)

- To be the nation through whom the Messiah would come
- To be the people through who God would give the Word - Law and the Prophets
- A personal relationship with God as He led them by prophet and fire and cloud
- To be heirs of Salvation by grace through faith, through God’s promise to them
- The Levitical Priesthood and the service of worship to God, even the “Shekinah” glory
- To be the nation who would inherit the promised land and the Kingdom on earth
Romans 9:3-5 - 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, 4 who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, 5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. NASB

And this is just a few of those chosen by God in the Old Testament. Now consider, Gideon, Samson, David, Solomon, and many, many more who by no doing of their own, became the recipients of God’s special favor (grace), having been specifically picked out by God for His service and the privileges that come along with it. But this is not just an Old Testament concept, appearing clearly in many places in the New Testament in the conversion of some, and also being clearly taught in NT doctrinal passages as the very ground of Salvation. People get saved and come to Christ because they have been elected by God beforehand for this privilege.

Romans 11:5-6 - 5 In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God’s gracious choice. 6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. NASB

God chose to save Cornelius and his family. Consider the account of Cornelius in Acts chapter 10. In this account, God Sovereignly saves Cornelius and his family and friends in a very specific and unusual way. Notice several things in this account which are initiated by God to save this Gentile Roman centurion.

- God gives an Angelic vision – v-1-8
  - specifically sending him to Peter, even telling him where he is staying
  - verse 22 says “he was divinely directed by a holy angel to send for you”
- God prepares Peter by heavenly vision – v-9-16
- God sends Peter specifically to Cornelius – v-17-23
- Peter preaches the Gospel – v-34-43
- God Sovereignly imparts the Holy Spirit to the whole crowd (Cornelius’ relatives and friends) – v-44

God chose Saul of Tarsus, not only for salvation, but also to be His Gospel messenger to the Gentile world. Even in the midst of Saul’s vicious hatred of the Church, God chooses him out to be saved.

Acts 9:13-17 - 13 But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Thy saints at Jerusalem; 14 and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon Thy name. " 15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; 16 for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake." NASB

God chose Lydia to be saved. Lydia’s regeneration is clearly described in Acts chapter 16.

Acts 16:14-15 - 14 And a certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. 15 And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us. NASB

God chose the disciples to be saved. He specifically tells them that they did not choose Him, but that He chose them. Consider how the Bible describes their election to Salvation.

John 15:16,19 - 16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you…. 19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but
because you are not of the world, **but I chose you out of the world**, therefore the world hates you.

**NASB**

John 6:70 - 70 Jesus answered them, "**Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve**, and yet one of you is a devil?" **NASB**

The New Testament speaks again and again about the election of the church to salvation. The very word "**church**" is a word which means to "call out of." [Gk. *ekklesia*]

1 Peter 2:9 - 9 But **you are a chosen race**, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of **Him who has called you out** of darkness into His marvelous light; **NASB**

Mark 13:20 - 20 "**And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved**; but for the **sake of the elect whom He chose**, He shortened the days. **NASB**

Colossians 3:12 - 12 And so, as those who **have been chosen of God**, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; **NASB**

God reserves the right to choose whomever He will for His own purposes. This is seen in many places in Scripture. Here are a few examples.

Luke 1:30-31 - 30 And the angel said to her, "**Do not be afraid, Mary : for you have found favor with God**. 31 "And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. **NASB**

John 5:5-9 - 5 And **a certain man was there, who had been thirty-eight years in his sickness**. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, "**Do you wish to get well?**" 7 The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me." 8 Jesus said to him, "Arise, take up your pallet, and walk." 9 And immediately the man became well, and took up his pallet and began to walk. **NASB**

Acts 10:40-41 - 40 "**God raised Him up on the third day**, and granted that **He should become visible**, 41 **not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God**, that is, to us, who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. **NASB**