

**Question: Did Christ die to make salvation possible or did He die to actually save the elect? When I think of the church as the bride I see the picture of an arranged marriage by the Father and that He knows exactly who the bride is. How do you see election and regeneration coming to pass with someone putting their faith in Christ?**

**Answer:** I believe Christ died to make salvation possible AND to actually save the elect. I also believe that the Bible teaches that Christ died for the sins of the whole world. My conviction is based upon the following verses:

- John 1:29: “The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’”
- John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”
- 1 Timothy 2:6: “...who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.”
- 1 Timothy 4:10: “For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.”
- Titus 2:11: “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men.”
- Hebrews 2:9: “But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.”
- 2 Peter 2:1: “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.”
- 1 John 2:2: “...and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.”

I think your analogy of an arranged marriage by the Father (i.e., the election of the bride) is profound. I agree with you. The Father not only knows His bride, He actively draws the members of the bride to Himself (see John 6:44). He even “gives” the members of the bride to the Bridegroom (John 6:38; 17:2). These actions stem from God’s foreknowledge and election.

The word “foreknowledge” (*proginosko*) does not suggest that God merely “foreknew” those individuals who would believe in Christ and then chose these persons for salvation. The term “foreknew” is found only seven times in the New Testament. The verb form is found in Acts 26:5; Romans 8:29; 11:2; 1 Peter 1:20; and 2 Peter 3:17. The noun form is found in Acts 2:23 and 1 Peter 1:2. This root meaning “to know before” seems to be intended in Acts 26:5 and 2 Peter 3:17. However, several observations should be made: First, in Acts 26:5 and 2 Peter 3:17, it is man’s “foreknowledge” which is in view and not God’s. Second, the word “foreknow” means more than the fact that God knows the future. Third, the word “foreknow” is never used for God’s knowledge of events and things; it is only used of His knowledge of people. For example, in Romans 8:29, the object of “foreknew” is “those whom.” The object is people. Fourth, the key to understanding this term as Paul uses it is to better understand the way in which God “knew” men in the Old Testament.

The English word “know” can be the translation of several terms (both Hebrew and Greek). Its meaning can range from a simple knowledge to a much more intimate knowledge. For example, we are told that Adam “knew” his wife Eve so that she conceived and gave birth to Cain (Gen 4:1). Obviously, this knowledge is much more than mere intellectual awareness. It speaks of a knowledge founded on love. Both the Old and New Testaments use the word “know” to describe an experiential knowledge grounded in love (e.g., Gen. 18:19; Exod 2:25; Deut 34:10; Ps 1:6; 144:3; Isa 46:9-10; Jer 1:5; Hosea 13:5; Amos 3:2; Matt 1:25; 7:23; John 1:10; 10:14, 27; 17:3; 1 Cor 8:3; Gal 4:9; 2 Tim 2:19; 1 John 3:1). Lastly, it is worth noting that the biblical authors had a choice of two Greek words which mean “foreknowledge” (*proginosko* and *prooida*). They chose the word *proginosko* that indicates experiential knowledge of something or someone instead of the word that tends to identify that which is known as intellectual knowledge (i.e., knowledge of facts).

Like foreknowledge, the doctrine of election points to God’s sovereign love for specific individuals. I believe the Bible teaches the following truths about election:

- Election is necessary in light of man’s total depravity (Rom 3:10-20; Eph 4:17-19).
- Election is necessary in light of man’s inability (Eph 2:1-3).
- Election is individual and unconditional (Acts 13:48; Rom 9:11; 1 Thess 1:4).
- Election is compatible with God’s sovereignty (Jer 10:23; Prov 19:21).
- Election is compatible with man’s responsibility (John 3:16-18; Rev 22:17).
- Election is portrayed as being from all eternity (Eph 1:4; 2 Tim 1:9).
- Election is designed for the purpose of sanctification (John 15:16; Col 3:12; 2 Thess 2:13; 1 Pet 2:9).
- Election is a loving expression of God’s grace (Eph 1:4-11).
- Election is a sovereign expression of God’s glory (Eph 1:12-14).

You also asked about the relationship of regeneration in salvation. The word “regeneration” occurs in Titus 3:5; James 1:18; and 1 Peter 1:3, 23. Spiritual birth is also discussed in John 1:13 and 3:3-8. Reformed theologians insist that regeneration must precede faith because of total depravity. They argue that if depravity is truly total, then a person’s sinful will must be regenerated before he/she can believe. While this certainly seems to make sense logically, there is no evidence to support this notion in the Scriptures. This understanding of regeneration is much like the Reformed view of limited atonement.

I believe the above verses indicate that regeneration does not precede faith. Rather, I believe that regeneration takes place simultaneously with faith or after faith. If you are interested in learning more, I encourage you to check out David Anderson’s article, “Regeneration: A *Crux Interpretum*.” Click here: <http://www.faithalone.org/journal/2000ii/Anderson.htm>. This is the best article I’ve ever read on this subject.