

## What are *Infra-lapsarianism*, *Sub-lapsarianism*, and *Supra-lapsarianism*?

**Answer:** These three theological terms, discussed among Calvinist thinkers, deal with God's predestination of certain individuals to be saved. The term *lapsarian* is related to the English word *lapse*; mankind's fall into sin was a "lapse" in that it was a "slip" or a "falling" from their original state of innocence.

The distinction between them is *sequence*—the order in which God determined things to happen. In what order did God create humanity, allow the fall, elect some to salvation, and provide salvation for humanity?

Ultimately, these are issues that we are incapable of fully grasping. It does not truly matter what order God decreed what to occur. What truly matters is that God created humanity, humanity sinned, and God has provided salvation through Jesus Christ.

INFRA-LAPSARIANISM ("after the lapse") puts God's decrees in the following order:

- (1) God decreed the creation of mankind,
- (2) God decreed to allow mankind to fall into sin through self-determination,
- (3) God decreed to save some of the fallen,
- (4) God decreed to provide Jesus Christ as the Redeemer.

Infra-lapsarianism focuses on God allowing the fall and providing salvation. This is by far the majority Reformed (or Calvinistic) view.

SUB-LAPSARIANISM ("under the lapse") is very similar to infralapsarianism, putting God's decrees in the following order:

- (1) God decreed to create human beings,
- (2) God decreed to permit the fall,
- (3) God decreed to provide salvation sufficient to all,
- (4) God decreed to choose some to receive this salvation.

The only difference between infra-lapsarianism and sub-lapsarianism is whether God *first* decreed to provide salvation through Jesus Christ and *then* chose some to be saved, or vice-versa.

SUPRA-LAPSARIANISM / ANTE-LAPSARIANISM ("before the lapse") puts God's decrees in the following order:

- (1) God decreed the election of some and the eternal condemnation of others,
- (2) God decreed to create those elected and eternally condemned,
- (3) God decreed to permit the fall,
- (4) God decreed to provide salvation for the elect through Jesus Christ.

Supra-lapsarianism focuses on God ordaining the fall, creating certain people for the sole purpose of being condemned, and then providing salvation for only those whom He had elected.

GotQuestions finds infra-lapsarianism to be the most biblical position. We do not believe the Bible portrays God as decreeing the fall and creating people for the sole purpose of eternal condemnation. Ultimately, though, the answers to the lapsarian issue are best left up to God. Instead of worrying or arguing over when God decreed what, our concern should be on proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ to all who need to hear it.

<https://www.gotquestions.org/lapsarianism.html>