

Infralapsarian Order of the Elective Decrees

Ephesians 1:4 - He has elected us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him.

Ephesians 1:5 - By means of virtue love, God predestined us for the purpose of adoption to Himself through Jesus Christ according to the grace purpose of His will.

This is associated with the biblical order of the elective decrees which we classify as *Infralapsarian: Infralapsarianism*

Infralapsarianism

The word “lapse” is an English word taken from the Latin *lapsus* and means “to fall.” In theology, it is used in reference to the Fall of Adam. A Lapsarian then is one who believes that Adam is a fallen being. Among those who subscribed to this Lapsarian claim, there arose a debate as to the logical order of God's elective decrees. In other words, how did God chose to solve the problem of a fallen creation? Biblical scholarship has determined that the correct logical order of the decrees should place election after the Fall. Election, simply put, is God’s choice of those who will have eternal life and those who will not. The prefix “infra-” means “under,” or, “below.” Literally, then, Infralapsarian means “under the lapse.” In other words, when the Infralapsarian lists the decrees of God, election is listed under, or after, the Fall of Adam. Thus, the Infralapsarian order of the elective decrees is as follows:

The decree to create all mankind. This is the doctrine of selection associated with the procreation of men acting on their free will. God permits man to procreate but only He can impute soul life thus creating human life. When such an imputation occurs, this is classified as “selection.” Man procreates, God selects.

PRINCIPLE: You cannot elect what does not exist.

The decree to permit the Fall. Among the thoughts, decisions, and actions clearly understood by God in eternity past was man's decision to violate the lone imperative of the Garden of Eden. Since mankind’s volition must at all times remain free, God decreed to permit the Fall to occur. This results in the doctrine of total depravity meaning that all individuals are born physically alive but spiritually brain dead.

PRINCIPLE: Condemnation must precede salvation.

The decree to provide salvation for all mankind. Since all volition is created free, then each individual must be permitted equal opportunity and equal privilege to hear the Gospel objectively and given the liberty to respond.

PRINCIPLE: The doctrine of unlimited atonement.

The decree to elect those who believe in Jesus Christ and to leave in just condemnation all who do not. What determines the elect is each individual's personal volitional decision to believe that Jesus is the Christ. Such belief initiates spiritual birth to which is imputed the privilege of election into God’s perfect plan.

PRINCIPLE: God provides all men free will to accept or reject His grace offer of salvation through faith alone in Christ alone.

The decree to apply salvation to those who believe. The elect are the recipients of eternal life, guaranteed a resurrection body, and adopted into the Royal Family of God.

PRINCIPLE: Each individual must first choose God’s plan of salvation after which God decrees to elect that person to eternal life in His Heaven.

Acts 16:30 and Acts 16:31 reveals the sequence of the infralapsarian order of the elective decrees:

Acts 16:30 - (The Philippian jailer) brought (Paul and Silas) out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”

Acts 16:31 - They replied, “(You) believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved ...”

The understood subject “you” refers specifically to the Philippian jailer but generally to all who ask the question, “What must I do to be saved?”

Since you must exist in order to ask the question and to hear the response, then the “decree to create mankind” must come first. It is obvious that the subject is not saved and must do something in order to be saved. Consequently, he must be fallen. Elective decree #2: To permit the Fall.

That Paul and Silas have an answer to the question indicates that a way of salvation has been provided for everyone. Elective decree #3: To provide salvation to all mankind.

The requirement is a simple volitional decision to believe in Jesus Christ. The verb “believe” is in the imperative mood which is a challenge to human volition. We are free to accept or reject Christ as Savior. This illustrates the fourth elective decree: To elect those who believe in Christ and to leave in just condemnation all who do not believe.

Finally, it is clear that those who do believe will be saved. This is the fifth elective decree: To apply salvation to those who believe in Christ. Thus, the infralapsarian order of elective decrees clearly reveals that salvation is available to everyone and may be appropriated by means of faith alone in Christ alone. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”

Theologically, election of the Royal Family occurred in eternity past, “before the foundation of the world.” Historically however, selection precedes election.