Conditional Clause

A. Conditional Sentences
1. There are over 600 formal conditional sentences in the NT (i.e., with an explicit *if*).
2. This works out to an average of about one per page in Nestle.
3. Besides these formal conditions, there are hundreds of implicit conditions.
4. Thus, a proper understanding of conditions impacts one’s exegesis at every turn of the page.
5. The conditional sentence in ancient Greece was used as a debater’s technique to win a debate regardless of the side you took.
6. It was the technique of the premise and conclusion, dating back 2500 years ago.
7. The premise is called the protasis and the conclusion is called the apodasis.
8. The protasis is the cause that states the supposition or the premise.
9. The apodasis is the cause that states the conclusion derived from the premise.
10. If the logic between the premise and the conclusion is accurate and correct, the debater makes his point and wins his debate regardless of which side he takes.
11. Winning a debate does not mean that the truth wins.
12. Winning a debate to the Greeks was one of the greatest pleasures and they were more interested in great debates than anything else.
13. The key to this debating technique is the selection of a premise that suits you which results in the conclusion necessary to win the debate.
14. There are 4 ways to select your premise in the 5th century B.C., the Age of Pericles.
15. Each premise is called a protasis and was used to give the advantage to the debater who selected it.
16. Conditional clauses may be classified on the basis of the attitude they express with reference to reality.
17. There is no necessary correspondence in tense between protasis and apodasis.
18. The variation in the mood of the apodasis has no essential bearing on the force of the condition since the 1st class condition assumes the condition to be true.
19. The context must determine the actual situation.

B. Protasis and Apodasis
1. The apodosis is grammatically independent, but semantically dependent.
2. That is, it can stand on its own as a full-blown sentence (e.g., “If I die, I die”), but it depends for its “factuality” on the fulfillment of the protasis (“If he wins this race, he’ll be the new champion”).
3. The protasis, on the other hand, is grammatically dependent, but semantically independent.
4. That is, it does not form a complete thought (“If I go swimming tomorrow, I’ll catch a cold”), but its fulfillment is independent of whether the apodosis is true.
5. Conditional sentences can be defined structurally or semantically.
   a. Structurally: A conditional sentence has two parts: an “if” part and a “then” part. “IF” = protasis; “THEN” = apodosis.
   b. Semantically: Conditions can be defined semantically in terms of the overall construction as well as the individual components.
6. There is often a tacit assumption that the protasis of a condition indicates the cause and the apodosis tells the effect.
7. But this is not the only relation the two can have.
8. In essence, there are three basic relations that a protasis can have to an apodosis:
   a. Cause-effect
   b. Evidence-inference
   c. Equivalence.
9. It is a profitable exercise to examine the biblical text in light of these basic nuances.
10. Cause-Effect: The first relation the two parts can have is that of cause and effect: “IF” = cause; “THEN” = effect.
11. The second relation the protasis can have to the apodosis is that of ground, or evidence, to inference.
12. Here the speaker infers something (the apodosis) from some evidence.
13. That is, he makes an induction about the implications that a piece of evidence suggests to him.
14. The third relation the two parts can have to one another is one of equivalence.
15. That is, we could put this formula this way: “If A, then B” means the same thing as “A = B.” (This often looks very similar to evidence-inference.).
16. Conditional statements refer to the portrayal of reality rather than to reality itself.
17. However, within these parameters the following can be said:
   a. If A, then B [not =] if B, then A (the converse not necessarily true).
   b. If A, then B [not =] if non-A, then non-B (reverse not necessarily false)
   c. If A, then B does not deny if C then B (condition not necessarily exclusive or condition not necessarily causal).
18. Only the protasis is the conditional element, that is, the contingency lies with the if, not the then.
19. If the protasis is fulfilled, the apodosis is also fulfilled.
20. As far as it is presented, although sometimes the apodosis may be true without the protasis being true, the apodosis must be true when the protasis is true.
21. That is to say, as far as portrayal is concerned, if the protasis is fulfilled, the apodosis is true.
22. Thus, “If you put your hand in the fire, you will get burned” is saying that if you fulfill the condition, the consequence is true.
23. So there are 2 ways to convey a conditional sentence:
   a. Implicitly: without formal structural markers (e.g. ei or an).
   b. Explicitly: with a formal structural marker (e.g. ei or an).
24. Sometimes there is an incomplete condition where there may be an absence of either the protasis or the apodosis, which is a form of ellipsis or aposiopesis and is common to all languages.

C. Types of Conditional Sentence
1. Robertson has termed these 4 kinds of conditional sentences as follows:
   a. Reality (Determined as fulfilled): Assumes the condition to be a reality and the conclusion follows logically and naturally from that assumption.
   b. Unreality (Determined as Unfilled): The premise is assumed to be contrary to fact. The thing itself may be true, but it is treated as untrue.
   c. Probability (Undetermined, but with the Prospect of Determination): Uses in the condition clause the mode of expectation, the subjunctive. It is not determined as is true of the 1st and 2nd class conditions.
   d. Possibility (Remote Prospect of Determination): Uses optative in the protasis denoting that the condition is undetermined with less likelihood of determination than is true of the 3rd class with the subjunctive.
2. He states, “The point about all 4 classes to note it that the form of the condition has to do only with the statement, not with the absolute truth or certainty of the matter…We must distinguish always therefore between the fact and the statement of fact. The conditional sentence deals only with the statement” (A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in Light of Historical Research page 1005).
3. Supposition from the viewpoint of reality.
   a. The protasis of a condition may present one fact as conditioning another.
   b. In one form of condition there is nothing implied as to whether or not this fact actually exists.
   c. This we call the simple condition.
   d. In another form of condition it is implied that this fact has not been realized, and therefore does not exist.
   e. This we call contrary to fact condition.
4. Supposition from the viewpoint of probability.
   a. The protasis may imply that the fact suggested as a condition is a probability.
   b. Sometimes it is implied that there is considerable probability of its fulfillment.
   c. This we call the more probable future condition.
   d. Again the protasis may not contain any special implication of the fulfillment of the condition, viewing it merely as a possibility.
   e. This we call the less probable future condition.
5. Thus we find that there are 4 classes of conditional sentences:
   a. 1st class condition: Premise as a supposition from the viewpoint of reality, or premise based on fact.
   b. 2nd class condition: Premise, which is contrary to fact.
   c. 3rd class condition: Premise which is more probable future, premise of probability.
   d. 4th class condition: Premise of less probability in a future condition often the information contained in the premise is a wish without any implication.
6. The apodasis may have any tense, any mode and may be the following:
   a. Statement
   b. Prediction
   c. Command
d. Prohibition

f. Question.

7. Hence the apodasis may be in the:
   a. Indicative
   b. Subjunctive
   c. Imperative.

8. Chamberlain lists the following regarding conditional sentences (Exegetical Grammar, pages 195-200):
   a. 1st Class Conditions
      (1) The protasis will always have the indicative mood, and will usually be introduced by *ei* (sometimes, by *ean* or *an*, due to a loss of distinction between these particles). It may use any of the tenses.
      (2) The apodasis (conclusion) may have any tense and any mode. It may be a statement or a question.
   b. 2nd Class Conditions
      (1) The protasis will always have the indicative mood, and will be introduced by *ei*. The tense will always be a past tense: imperfect, aorist, and pluperfect.
      (2) The apodasis will take a past tense of the indicative. Usually *an* will occur in the apodasis to mark this condition off from a 1st class condition.
      (3) If the condition refers to present time, the imperfect is used
      (4) If the condition refers to past time, usually the aorist tense is used
      (5) If it is desired to express continued action in past time, the imperfect must be used
   c. 3rd Class Conditions
      (1) The protasis will have always have the subjunctive mood, and will usually be introduced by *ean* but occasionally by *ei*.
      (2) Since the subjunctive mode alone is used, the tense is limited to present and aorist.
      (3) The apodasis may have any mode or any tense.
      (4) It may make a statement, ask a question, or give a command.
   d. 4th Class Conditions
      (1) The protasis has the optative mood, and is introduced by *ei*.
      (2) It may use either the present or the aorist tense.
      (3) The apodasis has the optative mood, and the modal *an*.
   e. Mixed Conditions
      (1) The protasis will belong to one class of conditions and the apodasis to another.
      (2) These mixed conditions arise from the fact that the writer changes his viewpoint between the protasis and the apodasis.
   f. Elliptical Conditions
      (1) Often the apodasis is expressed and the protasis is simply implied.
      (2) The protasis may be implied in several ways:
      (3) By the participle
      (4) By a verb in the imperative mood
      (5) The protasis may be abbreviated to the vanishing point
      (6) The apodasis may be omitted

9. Wallace lists the following (Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics-Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament):
   a. 1st Class Condition: Assumed true for arguments sake.
   b. 2nd Class Condition: Contrary to Fact
   c. 3rd Class Condition: Uncertain of fulfillment, but still likely to occur
   d. 4th Class Condition: Possible condition in the future, usually a remote possibility

D. Wallace makes the following comments regarding the 1st Class Condition (Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics-Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament):
   1. The first class condition indicates the assumption of truth for the sake of argument.
   2. The normal idea, then, is if-and let us assume that this is true for the sake of argument-then….
   3. This class uses the particle ει with the indicative (in any tense) in the protasis.
   4. In the apodosis, any mood and any tense can occur.
   5. This is a frequent conditional clause, occurring about 300 times in the NT.
   6. There are two views of the first class condition that need to be avoided.
   7. First is the error of saying too much about its meaning.
8. The first class condition is popularly taken to mean the condition of reality or the condition of truth.
9. Many have heard this from the pulpit: "In the Greek this condition means since."
10. This is saying too much about the first class condition.
11. For one thing, this view assumes a direct correspondence between language and reality, to the effect that the indicative mood is the mood of fact.
12. For another, this view is demonstrably false for conditional statements:
   a. In apparently only 37% of the instances is there a correspondence to reality (to the effect that the condition could be translated since)
   b. Further, there are 36 instances of the first class condition in the NT that cannot possibly be translated since.
13. The force of the indicative mood, when properly understood, lends itself to the notion of presentation of reality.
14. In the first class condition the conditional particle turns such a presentation into a supposition.
15. This does not mean that the condition is true or means since!
16. But it does mean that as far as the portrayal is concerned, the point of the argument is based on the assumption of reality.
17. First, even in places where the argument is apparently believed by the speaker, the particle εἰ should not be translated "since."
18. Greek had several words for since, and the NT writers were not opposed to using them (e.g., ἐπεί, ἐπείδη). 
19. There is great rhetorical power in if.
20. To translate εἰ as since is to turn an invitation to dialogue into a lecture.
21. Often the idea seems to be an encouragement to respond, in which the author attempts to get his audience to come to the conclusion of the apodosis (since they already agree with him on the protasis).
22. It thus functions as a tool of persuasion.
23. Second, how can we tell whether a speaker would actually affirm the truth of the protasis?
24. Context, of course, is the key, but a good rule of thumb is to note the apodosis: Does the logic cohere if both protasis and apodosis are true?
25. Often when a question is asked in the apodosis, the author does not embrace the truth of the protasis.
26. These are only simple guidelines.
27. Where in doubt, check the broader context.
28. Not infrequently conditional sentences are used rhetorically in a way that goes beyond the surface structure.
29. Hence, on one level the structure might indicate one thing, but on another level, an entirely different meaning is in view.
30. For example, suppose a mother says to her child, "If you put your hand in the fire, you'll get burned."
31. We could analyze the condition on a structural or logical level.
32. These ought not to be ignored.
33. But the pragmatic meaning of the statement is, "Don't put your hand in the fire!"
34. It is, in effect, a polite command, couched in indirect language.

E. Wallace makes the following comments regarding the 2nd Class Condition (Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics-Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament):
1. The second-class condition indicates the assumption of an untruth (for the sake of argument).
2. For this reason it is appropriately called the “contrary to fact” condition (or the unreal condition).
3. It might be better to call it presumed contrary to fact, however, since sometimes it presents a condition that is true, even though the speaker assumes it to be untrue (e.g., Luke 7:39).
4. In the protasis the structure is εἰ + indicative mood with a secondary tense (aorist or imperfect usually).
   The apodosis usually has α[τί (but some examples lack this particle), and a secondary tense in the indicative mood.
5. There are about 50 examples of the second-class condition in the NT.
6. There are two types of second-class conditions: present contrary-to-fact and past contrary-to-fact.
7. The present contrary-to-fact condition uses the imperfect in both the protasis and apodosis.
8. It refers to something that is not true in the present time (from the speaker’s portrayal).
9. A typical translation would be If X were … then Y would be (as in “If you were a good man, then you would not be here right now”).
10. The past contrary-to-fact uses the aorist in both the protasis and apodosis.
11. It refers to something that was not true in the past time (from the speaker’s portrayal).
12. A typical translation would be If X had been … then Y would have been (as in “If you had been here yesterday, you would have seen a great game”).

F. Wallace makes the following comments regarding the 3rd Class Condition (Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics-Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament):
1. The third class condition often presents the condition as uncertain of fulfillment, but still likely.
2. There are, however, many exceptions to this.
3. It is difficult to give one semantic label to this structure, especially in Hellenistic Greek (note the discussion below).
4. The structure of the protasis involves the particle ejavn followed by a subjunctive mood in any tense.
5. Both the particle (a combination of εἰ and the particle a[n]) and the subjunctive give the condition a sense of contingency.
6. The apodosis can have any tense and any mood.
7. This is a common category of conditional clauses, occurring nearly 300 times in the NT.
8. The third class condition encompasses a broad semantic range: (a) a logical connection (if A, then B) in the present time (sometimes called present general condition), indicating nothing as to the fulfillment of the protasis; (b) a mere hypothetical situation or one that probably will not be fulfilled; and (c) a more probable future occurrence.
9. Technically, the subjunctive is used in the third class condition as well as the fifth class condition.
10. Structurally, these two are virtually identical: The fifth class condition requires a present indicative in the apodosis, while the third class can take virtually any mood-tense combination, including the present indicative.
11. Semantically, their meaning is a bit different.
12. The third class condition encompasses a broad range of potentialities in Koine Greek.
13. It depicts what is likely to occur in the future, what could possibly occur, or even what is only hypothetical and will not occur.
14. In classical Greek the third class condition was usually restricted to the first usage (known as more probable future), but with the subjunctive’s encroaching on the domain of the optative in the Hellenistic era, this structural category has expanded accordingly.
15. The context will always be of the greatest help in determining an author’s use of the third class condition.
16. The fifth class offers a condition the fulfillment of which is realized in the present time.
17. This condition is known as the present general condition.
18. For the most part this condition is a simple condition; that is, the speaker gives no indication about the likelihood of its fulfillment. His presentation is neutral: “If A, then B.”
19. Because of the broad range of the third class condition and the undefined nature of the fifth class, many conditional clauses are open to interpretation.
20. But for the most part, the present general condition addresses a generic situation in the present time (broadly speaking), while the more probable future addresses a specific situation in the future time.

G. Wallace makes the following comments regarding the 4th Class Condition (Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics-Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament):
1. The fourth class condition indicates a possible condition in the future, usually a remote possibility (such as if he could do something, if perhaps this should occur).
2. The protasis involves εἰ + the optative mood.
3. The optative is also used in the apodosis along with a[n] (to indicate contingency).
4. Because of the increasing use of the subjunctive and decreasing use of the optative in Hellenistic Greek, it should come as no surprise that there are no complete fourth-class conditions in the NT.
5. Sometimes the conditional clause is mixed, with a non-optative in the apodosis (e.g., Acts 24:19).
6. On two other occasions, there is an apodosis, but a verbless one (1 Pet 3:14, 17).
7. On other occasions, no apodosis is to be supplied, the protasis functioning as a sort of stereotyped parenthesis (e.g., 1 Cor 14:10; 15:37).
8. The semantic significance of the fourth class condition, even though it is never complete in the NT, must not be overlooked.
9. As we have pointed out, the subjunctive has increasingly encroached on the domain of the optative in Koine Greek,
10. Thus, the subjunctive’s semantic domain has broadened.
11. But this does not mean that there is overlap in both directions; the optative still functions within its more narrow confines.
12. This is due to the principle that when an author chooses the rarer form (in this case, the optative), he does so consciously.