

Greek Conditional Sentences

Conditional sentences are "If ..., then ..." statements. They make a statement that if something happens, then something else will happen. The 'if' clause is referred to as the '**protasis**' by grammarians. It comes from the Greek words '**pro**' (meaning before) and '**stasis**' (meaning 'stand'). So the 'protasis' means 'what stands before' or '**comes first**' as far as these two clauses are concerned. The 'then' clause is termed the '**apodosis**'; it is what 'comes after' the protasis. The Apodosis is the main clause and the Protasis the dependent clause.

Apodosis-THEN

Protasis-IF

Logical Relationship between Protasis and Apodosis

There are a number of different relationships that can exist between the protasis and apodosis. It is important that you try to distinguish between these relationships for sake of more clearly understanding the text. Please also note that there can be some overlap between these three relationships.

Cause-Effect

1. They could represent a Cause-Effect relationship, where the action in the protasis will cause the effect in the apodosis. For example: Romans 8:13b, "...but if by the spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live." *Strictly cause and effect, no inference of truth or falseness.*

2. They could show an Evidence-Inference type relationship, where the apodosis is inferred to be true based upon the evidence presented in the protasis. This will often be semantically the converse of the 'Cause-Effect' relationship. For example: 1 Cor. 15:44, "If there is a soulish body, there is also a spiritual one."

3. Or, the relationship could be one showing Equivalence between the protasis and apodosis, which is actually a subset of the Evidence-Inference relationship. For example: Gal. 2:18, "...if I build up again those things which I destroyed, I prove myself a transgressor."

Classification of Greek Conditional Sentences

Greek has more ability than English in describing the kind of relationship between the protasis, and the apodosis. It is possible for the writer/speaker to indicate whether the protasis is true or not. Actually, they can indicate if they are presenting the protasis as 'assumed true (or false) for the sake of argument'. In order to indicate this kind of relationship between the protasis and apodosis, Classical Greek traditional had four kinds of conditional sentences, based upon what tense and mood the verb occurs in and upon some helping words. These are much the same in Koine (Biblical) Greek, with slight variations.

EV-Inf-Class#1

→ **First Class Condition**—Is considered the '**Simple Condition**' and assumes that the premise (protasis) is true for the sake of argument. The protasis is formed with the helping word ei ('if') with the main verb in the indicative mood, in any tense; with any mood and tense in the apodosis.

EV-Inf-Class#2

→ **Second Class Condition**—Is known as the '**Contrary-to-Fact Condition**' and assumes the premise as false for the sake of argument. The protasis is again formed with the helping word ei ('if') and the main verb in the indicative mood. The tense of the verb (in the protasis) must also be in a past-time tense (aorist or imperfect). The apodosis will usually have the particle an as a marking word, showing some contingency.

EV-Inf-Class#3

→ **Third Class Condition**—Traditionally known as the 'More Probable Future Condition', the third class condition should actually be split into two different categories, the '**Future More Probable Condition**' (indicating either a probable future action or a hypothetical situation) and the '**Present General Condition**' (indicating a generic situation or universal truth at the present time). It is formed in the protasis using the word ean (ei plus an = 'if') and a verb in the subjunctive mood. The main verb of the protasis can be in any tense, but if the condition is a 'Present General', the verb must be in the present tense.

EV-Inf-Class#4

→ **Fourth Class Condition**—Is usually called the '**Less Probable Future Condition**' and does not have a complete example in the New Testament. The fulfillment of this condition was considered even more remote than the Third Class Condition. It was formed with the helping word ei and the optative mood in the protasis. The apodosis had the helping word an and its verb was also in the optative mood.

Writer assumes of infers truth or falseness

Greek Conditions

Two Greek words for “if”:

εἰ—[sounds like ay] “if” where the condition is assumed as true/factual

εἰάν—[sounds like on] “if” where the condition is considered possible, the “ify-if”!

4 Kinds of Conditions:

First Class Condition—where the condition is *assumed* as true

- ◆ If you are a teacher, you teach somewhere.
 - εἰ with an indicative verb in the “if part” (indicative mood **implies** factuality; it could be wrong, but it **implies** factuality in the statement)
 - “Penny is a genius!”—It is stated as a fact but in actuality is not true.)
 - Different options in the “then part”
 - If you are a teacher, you teach somewhere.
 - If you are a teacher, go teach someone.
 - If you are the son of God, throw yourself down from this pinnacle.

Second Class Condition—where the condition is *assumed* as true, but it is **contrary to fact**

- ◆ If you were a teacher, you would teach somewhere. (But you DON'T teach somewhere, so you are not a teacher.)
- ◆ If Jesus were on earth today, He would not be a high priest.
 - εἰ with a past tense indicative verb in the “if part”
 - αν often used in the “then part,” with the past tense verb. If αν is there, it indicates a **contrary to fact** condition.
 - If you were a prophet, you would know what kind of woman is touching your feet. (the meaning is— You obviously can't be a prophet....—the Pharisees are *assuming* a **contrary to fact condition** the way they were wording it, even though they are wrong and Jesus is a prophet!)

Third Class Condition—where the “if part” is possible. This is the **Most Common Condition**.

- ◆ If he comes, we will go to dinner. (We don't know for sure if he will come, but it is possible.)
 - εἰάν with a subjunctive verb in the “if part;” (subjunctive— things you hope will happen, want to happen, or you predict will happen)
 - Different options in the “then part,” but it is contingent on the “if part” taking place

Fourth Class Condition— where the “if part” is a more distant possibility; the NT doesn't use this in a pure form.

- ◆ If you would win the lottery, then you could buy an island.
 - Very rare
 - Has the εἰ with optative mood in the “if part;” (optative—indicates a wish or hope that is very unlikely)

“Greek Conditions and Questions.” YouTube Video by Ken Schenck.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0QufGqF4DC4>

Greek Conditional Sentences in the New Testament (Classified by Structural Formation)

Type of Condition	Possibility of Being Realized	Protasis—what comes first (“If”)			Apodosis—what comes after the protasis (“then”)			N.T. Examples	
		Conditional Word	Mood	Tense	Conditional Word	Mood	Tense		
Evidence-Inference Relationships									
	First Class <i>‘Simple Condition’</i> – ‘Presumed True for the Sake of Argument’ EV-Inf-Class#1	Assumes the reality/truth of a premise for the sake of argument, whether actually true or not.	εἰ (negative: οὐ) (Not accurate to translate as ‘since’.)	indicative—the verb form that makes a statement or asks a question	any tense		any mood	any tense	Matt.12:27-28, Luke 4:3 Romans 6:5 Galatians 5:18 Colossians 3:1
	Second Class Presumed <i>‘Contrary to Fact Condition’</i> a) in present time b) in past time EV-Inf-Class#2	Assumes the premise as untrue for the sake of argument, whether actually untrue or not.	εἰ (negative: μή)	indicative—the verb form that makes a statement or asks a question	past tense: a) imperfect b) aorist describes an event as a completed action rather than unfolding, repeated, or habitual. Used in ancient Greek.	(ὄν) (usually)	indicative	past tense: a) imperfect b) aorist—describes an event as a completed action rather than one that is ongoing, unfolding, repeated, or habitual. Used in ancient Greek.	a) <u>Present Time:</u> Luke 7:39 John 5:46 b) <u>Past Time:</u> Mark 13:20 1 Cor. 2:8
	Third Class <i>‘More Probable Future Condition’</i> a) ‘Future Likely’ ‘Probable’, or ‘Hypothetical’ Condition b) ‘Present General Condition’ (5 th Class Condition) EV-Inf-Class#3	Fulfillment is uncertain, but still likely. a) Specific situation in future time, OR Only hypothetical b) Generic situation in present time	εἴ (negative: μή)	subjunctive—a phrase you use when talking about things you hope will happen	a) any tense b) present		any mood	any tense	a) <u>Future More Probable:</u> Matt. 4:9 Mark 5:28 Hebrews 6:3 <u>Hypothetical:</u> 1 Cor. 13:2 b) <u>Present Gen:</u> Matt. 6:22-23 John 11:9 2 Timothy 2:5
Fourth Class <i>‘Less Probable Future Condition’</i> Only partial formations in NT. EV-Inf-Class#4	Possible fulfillment: “if perhaps this should occur, then ...”	εἰ	optative—indicates a wish or hope regarding a given action; not used in English	present or aorist	ὄν	optative	present or aorist	1 Peter 3:14, 17 Luke 1:62 Acts 17:18	