Conditional Sentences

It all depends!

A lesson for the Paideia web-app
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What is a conditional sentence?

• An “If...then...” sentence
  • States that something will happen if some condition is fulfilled

• Parts of a conditional sentence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protasis (condition)</th>
<th>Apodosis (result)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If I run out of milk...</td>
<td>...then I will go to the store.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I had been there...</td>
<td>...then I could have helped.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If she says yes...</td>
<td>...then we will get married.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Four kinds of conditional sentence

• Classified based on
  • The word introducing the protasis (which “if”?)
  • The tense and mood of the verb in the protasis
  • The tense of the verb in the apodosis

• The fourth never fully appears in the NT
  • So we’ll focus on the first three classes
First Class Conditional Sentences

- Classified based on
  - Protasis
    - introduced with εἰ
    - Indicative verb (any tense)

- A “condition of fact”
  - Protasis is treated as true
    - This is only from the speaker/writer’s perspective
    - This may only be for the sake of argument
  - A condition that is not really hypothetical
    - “If my mother loves me, she won’t forget my birthday.”
    - “Since I have to pay my taxes, I won’t be buying that new TV.”
First Class Conditional Sentences

• Classified based on
  • Protasis
    • introduced with εἰ
    • Indicative verb (any tense)

• Greek Example
  • Εἰ δὲ ἐν πνεύματι θεοῦ ἐγὼ ἐκβάλλω τὰ δαιμόνια, ἄρα ἐφθασεν ἐφ᾿ ύμᾶς ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ. (Mat 12:28)
    • “And if I am casting out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has come to you.”
Second Class Conditional Sentences

• Classified based on
  • Protasis
    • Introduced with ἐἰ
    • Verb indicative (past tense)
  • Apodosis
    • Usually starts with ἀν
    • Indicative verb (same past tense)

• A “contrary to fact” condition
  • Protasis is treated as untrue
    • The apodosis (result) is false
  • A hypothetical condition
    • “If I were an alien, then my kids would be too.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protasis</th>
<th>ἐἰ + indicative (past tense)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apodosis</td>
<td>ἀν + indicative (same tense)</td>
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Second Class Conditional Sentences

• Classified based on
  • Protasis
    •Introduced with εἰ
    •Verb indicative (past tense)
  • Apodosis
    •Usually starts with ἀν
    •Indicative verb (same past tense)

• A “contrary to fact” condition
  •Εἰ γὰρ ἐγνωσαν, οὐκ ἂν τὸν κύριον τῆς δόξης ἐσταύρωσαν· (1Co 2:8)
    •“Because if they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

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<th>Εἰ + indicative (past tense)</th>
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<td>Apodosis</td>
<td>ἀν + indicative (same tense)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Third Class Conditional Sentences

• Classified based on
  • Protasis
    • Introduced with ἐὰν
    • Subjunctive verb
  • Apodosis
    • Verb in any mood or tense

• A “possible condition”
  • Protasis is treated as possible, but uncertain
  • Less hypothetical than 2nd class, but less certain than 1st class
    • “If the sky is clear, then it isn’t raining.”
    • “If I stay up too late, I’ll be tired in the morning.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protasis</th>
<th>ἐὰν + subjunctive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apodosis</td>
<td>any mood and tense</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Third Class: Future More Probable

• Protasis possible but uncertain
  • A definite event in the future

• English example
  • “If I stay up too late, I’ll be tired in the morning.”

• Greek example
  • Καὶ ἐὰν ἀπολύσω αὐτοὺς νήστεις εἰς οἶκον αὐτῶν, ἐκλυθήσονται ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ.  (Mark 8:3)
  • “And if I let them go to their homes even though they are hungry, they will perish on the way.”
Third Class: Present General

• Protasis is a general possibility
  • No particular occasion in mind
  • Apodosis results whenever condition is true

• English example
  • “If the sky is clear, then it isn’t raining.”

• Greek example
  • Καὶ ἐὰν κρίνω δὲ ἐγώ, ἢ κρίσις ἢ ἐμὴ ἀληθινὴ ἐστιν... (John 8:16)
    • “But if I judge, my judgment is true...”
## Summary of Conditional Sentences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Protasis</th>
<th>Apodosis</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Negated with</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First class</strong></td>
<td>εἰ + indicative verb (any tense)</td>
<td>Verb in any mood (any tense)</td>
<td>Apodosis is true (at least for the sake of argument)</td>
<td>οὐ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second class</strong></td>
<td>εἰ + indicative verb (past tense)</td>
<td>ἀν + indicative (same tense as in protasis)</td>
<td>Apodosis is false (at least for the sake of argument)</td>
<td>μη</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Third class</strong></td>
<td>ἐαν + subjunctive verb</td>
<td>Verb in any mood (any tense)</td>
<td>Apodosis is a genuine possibility but not certain - may have specific future event in mind - may describe general cause/effect pattern</td>
<td>μη</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Gotchas” with Conditional Sentences

• First class conditions aren’t always *actually* true
  • The speaker may just be assuming its truth temporarily, for the sake of argument or effect.
  • Εἰ δὲ ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν οὐκ ἔστιν, οὐδὲ χριστὸς ἐγήγερται. (1Cor 15:13)
    • “But if there is no resurrection from the dead, then neither has Christ been raised.”
Keep Learning

• You can learn more about conditional sentences here:
  • Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek* (3rd edition)
    • ἐὰν and the subjunctive, 31.15 (pp. 293—4)
    • Conditional sentences, 35.5—35.9 (pp. 328—9)
    • “Conditional Sentences” (pp. 303-315)