The Four Classes of Conditional Sentences

Conditional Sentence = If ... (protasis) + then ... (apodosis)

Conditional	Protasis (if-clause)	Apodosis (conclusion-clause)	Meaning
First class	εἰ + any indicative (negated by οὐ)	any mood/tense	assumed true
Second class	εἰ + past indicative (negated by μή)	(ἄν) + past indicative	assumed false (contrary-to-fact)
Third class	ἐάν + subjunctive	any mood/tense (often future indicative)	might fulfill in future (some expectation)
Fourth class	εἰ + optative	(ἄν) + optative	doubt of fulfillment (remote prospect)

Notes:
1. First and second class conditionals portray certainty or assertion (indicative); the third and fourth portray doubt or undeterminedness (subjunctive/optative).
2. The key to identifying the class of a conditional is the <u>mood</u> of the protasis. Do not rely on particles (εἰ, ἐάν, ἄν). For example, a third class conditional protasis is usually introduced by ἐάν, but occasionally it uses εἰ; however, it will <u>always</u> be in the subjunctive mood.
3. First and third class conditionals are quite common.
4. Fourth class conditionals are rare (since the optative was dying out). In fact, there is no complete fourth class conditional sentence in the NT, LXX or papyri (often lacking apodosis).

1. First class conditional (assumed true for argument's sake)

a. εἰ = since

1Jn 4:11 Ἀγαπητοί, <u>εἰ</u> οὕτως ὁ θεὸς <u>ἠγάπησεν</u> ἡμᾶς, καὶ ἡμεῖς ὀφείλομεν ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶν. (ὀφείλω = "I ought")
KJV: Beloved, <u>if</u> God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.
NIV: Dear friends, <u>since</u> God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

b. εἰ = if (cannot mean "since")

Mt 12:27-28 καὶ <u>εἰ</u> ἐγὼ ἐν Βεελζεβοὺλ <u>ἐκβάλλω</u> τὰ δαιμόνια, οἱ υἱοὶ ὑμῶν ἐν τίνι ἐκβάλλουσιν; . . . 28 <u>εἰ</u> δὲ ἐν πνεύματι θεοῦ ἐγὼ <u>ἐκβάλλω</u> τὰ δαιμόνια, ἄρα ἔφθασεν ἐφ᾽ ὑμᾶς ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ. (ἄρα = "then"; φθάνω = "I arrive")
And <u>if</u> I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast (them) out? 28 But <u>if</u> I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God arrived upon you.
Obviously it is illogical to translate both sentenses as "since I cast out," because the arguments are opposed to each other. And it would be inconsistent to translate the first particie "if" and the second "since".
The force is "if, and let us assume that this is true for the sake of argument, I cast out demons" ... This yields satisfactory results for both halves. --<u>Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics</u> p.691, 693

2. Second class conditional (assumed false for argument's sake)

a. protasis = imperfect (contrary to a <u>present</u> fact: If X were ..., then Y would ...)

Jn 18:36 ἡ βασιλεία ἡ ἐμὴ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου. εἰ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου ἦν ἡ βασιλεία ἡ ἐμή, οἱ ὑπηρέται οἱ ἐμοὶ ἠγωνίζοντο [ἂν] ἵνα μὴ παραδοθῶ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις. νῦν δὲ ἡ βασιλεία ἡ ἐμὴ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐντεῦθεν.

(ὑπηρέτης = "attendant"; ἀγωνίζομαι = "I fight"; παραδίδωμι = "I deliver over" 1s aor pas subjunctive; ἐντεῦθεν = "from here")

My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom <u>were</u> of this world, my attendants <u>would be fighting</u> so that I would not be delivered over to the Jews. But now my kingdom is not from here.

Lk 7:39 οὗτος εἰ ἦν προφήτης, ἐγίνωσκεν ἂν τίς καὶ ποταπὴ ἡ γυνὴ. (ποταπός = "what kind of")

If this man <u>were</u> a prophet, he <u>would know</u> who and what kind the woman (is). Is Jesus a prophet? Yes, he is. So why second class condition here? RIght, it tells us that the Pharasee actually thinks Jesus is not a prophet. Language is a portrayal of reality from the speaker's perspective.

b. protasis = aorist/plupf (contrary to a <u>past</u> fact: If X had been ..., then Y would have ...)

Jn 15:22 εἰ μὴ ἦλθον καὶ ἐλάλησα αὐτοῖς, ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ εἴχοσαν.

If I <u>had not come</u> and <u>spoken</u> to them, they <u>would</u> not <u>have had</u> (any) sin. (But Jesus <u>did</u> come and did speak to them -- contrary to a <u>past</u> fact)

3. Third class conditional (condition probable in future)

a. apodosis = future -- more probable (If ... might happen, then ... will definitely happen)

Ro 10:9 ἐὰν ὁμολογήσῃς ἐν τῷ στόματί σου κύριον Ἰησοῦν καὶ
πιστεύσῃς ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου ὅτι ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ἤγειρεν ἐκ
νεκρῶν, σωθήσῃ. (ὁμολογέω = "I confess")
If you would confess in your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and would believe in your
heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.
The 3rd class conditional presents probability, not fact. To "confess" and
"believe" is realizable for the reader ("you"). Paul is not asserting if his reader
has confessed/believed or not (1st class condition).

b. apodosis = present -- general (stating a general truth, an axiomatic truth)

John 3:3 ἐὰν μή τις γεννηθῇ ἄνωθεν, οὐ δύναται ἰδεῖν τὴν
βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ. (ἄνωθεν = "again" or "from above")
Unless someone would be born again (or from above), he is not able to see
the kingdom of God.

4. Fourth class conditional (condition remotely possible)

1Pet 3:14 ἀλλ' εἰ καὶ πάσχοιτε διὰ δικαιοσύνην, μακάριοι.
(πάσχω = "I suffer" 2p pres act optive)
But even if you should suffer on account of righteousness, blessed (are you).