

Luke 21:32

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.

Analysis

Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Jesus introduces solemn certainty—amēn legō hymin (ἀμὲν λέγω ὑμῖν, "truly I say to you") is His signature formula guaranteeing truthfulness. The phrase hē genea autē ou mē parelthē (ἡ γενεὰ αὕτη οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ, "this generation shall certainly not pass away") uses emphatic double negative for absolute certainty. The demonstrative autē (αὕτη, "this") specifies the generation addressed—Jesus' contemporaries, not some distant future generation.

The temporal limit is heōs an panta genētai (ἕως ἂν πάντα γένηται, "until all things happen"). The adjective panta (πάντα, "all things") is crucial—what "all" encompasses determines interpretation. Context suggests primary reference to Jerusalem's destruction and related signs (vv. 5-24), which did occur within that generation (AD 30-70). The verb genētai (γένηται, "happen") is aorist subjunctive—when these things occur (fulfilled in AD 70), the prophecy is validated.

The interpretive challenge: does "all" include Christ's return (vv. 25-28)? Preterist interpreters say yes, seeing AD 70 as the coming in judgment. Futurist interpreters distinguish near-term fulfillment (AD 70) from distant fulfillment (Second Coming), understanding "all" as referring to Jerusalem's destruction specifically. A third view sees "generation" as the Jewish race—preserved until Christ returns. The text's primary meaning likely refers to AD 70, validating Jesus' prophetic authority for that generation while establishing patterns for ultimate fulfillment.

Historical Context

Jesus spoke these words circa AD 30-33. The generation He addressed witnessed every sign described in verses 5-24: false messiahs arose (Acts 5:36-37, Jewish War 2.13.4-5), earthquakes struck (Acts 16:26), persecution intensified (Acts 7-8, 12), Jerusalem was surrounded by armies and destroyed (AD 70), and Jews were dispersed into all nations. Josephus, born AD 37, witnessed and recorded the fulfillment—validating Jesus' prophecy within the generation addressed. This literal fulfillment demonstrates Jesus' prophetic reliability and establishes confidence that unfulfilled prophecies (Christ's return) will likewise occur. Early church's expectation of Christ's imminent return wasn't error but reasonable inference from this teaching, later clarified by apostolic instruction about God's timeline (2 Peter 3:8-9).

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does the literal fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy within the generation addressed validate His prophetic authority and establish confidence in unfulfilled prophecies?
2. What is the relationship between near-term fulfillment (AD 70) and ultimate fulfillment (Second Coming) in Jesus' eschatological teaching?
3. How should the certainty of 'all be fulfilled' shape Christian confidence in Scripture's reliability and God's sovereign control of history?

Interlinear Text

ἀμὲν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ ἡ γενεὰ
Verily **I say** **unto you** G3754 G3756 G3361 **pass away** G3588 **generation**
G281 G3004 G5213 G3928 G1074

αὕτη ἕως ἂν πάντα γένηται
This **till** G302 **all** **be fulfilled**
G3778 G2193 G3956 G1096

Additional Cross-References

Mark 13:30 (Parallel theme): Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done.

Matthew 24:34 (Parallel theme): Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

Matthew 23:36 (Parallel theme): Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

Matthew 16:28 (Parallel theme): Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.