

Where Did the Old Testament Saints Go?

Are Paradise, Abraham's Bosom and Heaven Different?

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Introduction

This article seeks to answer a question that seems to arise quite frequently, and has some very interesting answers. That question primarily centers around where the Old Testament saints went when they died. This question also has much to do with the word "paradise" and its usage in the Scripture. Are heaven and paradise the same? Or, are they different places? Moreover, what about Abraham's bosom? Is it different from paradise and heaven, or is it the same as either one of the two?

Some attempt to set a particular physical location for Abraham's bosom, paradise, heaven and hell. ((I say this as the way these places are described by various individuals leave one with the distinct impression that they can be nothing other than physical.))

This also will be addressed, along with the question of where the Lord Jesus Christ went when He died on the cross. The reason for this is that these doctrines are also tied to the primary subject of this article in the minds of many.

Scripture references for Paradise

To begin answering the primary question of where the Old Testament saints went when they died, we must begin to eliminate some possibilities. One of the simplest issues to resolve is the issue of paradise and heaven: Are they

different places, or are they the same?

There are only three (3) times in the whole Scripture that the word "paradise" is used. These three references are not complete proof one way or the other, without some additional verses. As always, we are to let Scripture interpret Scripture. The simplest (and in this case the most logical) ((The first mention of something in Scripture is not always the most logical, or the most correct place to begin. Although the rule of first mentions is helpful, I have not seen it to be a hard and fast rule. Moreover, I have seen erroneous doctrines come from this 'rule.')) place to begin is at the first reference to "paradise" in Scripture. We should note that the word "paradise" appears nowhere in the Old Testament. In Luke, chapter 23, we find the first reference.

But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.

And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise. (*Luke 23:40-43*)

Now, we find no clue in the above verse as to the possible location of "paradise." What we do find is that "paradise" is where the Lord Jesus Christ and the repentant thief will be "to day," meaning 'this very day,' or today. Thus, we must look at the other verses that use the word "paradise" for more information as to the location of "paradise." The next usage of the word is in the apostle Paul's second letter to the Corinthians.

I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the

body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. (*II Corinthians 12:2-4*)

In the above verse we find that "paradise" is now used as another reference to the "third heaven." Moreover, in that "third heaven" or "paradise," someone spoke words which are not lawful for man to utter, or speak. We can suppose many things about the "third heaven," but what we know for certain is that someone far higher than man spoke with great authority. We can suppose what the third heaven, and thus paradise are, but we have no conclusive proof. Thus, we must go on to the final reference to paradise in the Scripture.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. (*Revelation 2:7*)

Finally, in this verse we have some other thing which we can use in determining the location of "paradise" – the "tree of life." In this last reference to "paradise" in the New Testament from Revelation, chapter 2, verse 7, the verse lays out plainly the context of "paradise." In this verse we find that the "tree of life" is in the middle of the "paradise of God." This now leaves only one question: Where is that "tree of life?"

In chapter 22 of Revelation, we find a direct reference to the "tree of life," with its exact location given.

The Tree of Life

And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, *was there* the tree of life, which bare twelve *manner of* fruits, *and* yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations. (*Revelation*

22:1-2)

So it is that the “tree of life” is in close proximity to the throne of God and of the Lamb. The location of these thrones is undisputed in Scripture – it is heaven. This also now explains the “third heaven” that the apostle Paul was taken to. The “third heaven” is the heaven of heavens, or that spiritual place that all those who are born-again go to upon physical death.

Incidentally, this also gives only two possibilities for the “tree of life” in the Garden of Eden – it was either a picture of the tree of life in heaven, or the actual tree of life manifested physically.

And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (*Genesis 2:9*)

Now that we have eliminated paradise as being some other place than heaven, we can begin to look at the issue of “Abraham’s bosom” and whether the Scripture tells us the location of it.

New Testament references of the word “bosom”

And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. (*Luke 16:22-23*)

The above verse is the verse that is always used to claim that the Old Testament saints went somewhere other than heaven upon their death. However, we must determine if the above verse tells us anything about the location of “Abraham’s bosom” or is mere assumption being made concerning the location of “Abraham’s bosom.”

What we can see plainly from the above verse in Luke is that no location is given at all for "Abraham's bosom" and that we are going to have to research two possibilities for determining if the Scriptures will tell us where this is. These possibilities are:

1. The use of the word "bosom" in the Scriptures.
2. The location of Abraham after his decease, and thus the location of the Old Testament saints.

To begin, let's look at a representative sample of the usage of the word "bosom." For the purposes of determining location, the references must be consistent in usage. Otherwise, we will be able to determine nothing about the use of the word "bosom" as we have an inconsistency in application of the word. All this would mean is that the word "bosom" has several meanings and cannot be tied down to any specific place.

Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. (*Luke 6:37-38*)

And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*. (*John 1:16-18*)

Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.

Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. (*John 13:23*)

The above verses cited include three of the five times "bosom" is used in the New Testament. Once the underlying word is

translated "creek" as in a body of water.

Old Testament References for "bosom"

Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong *hand*, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward *is* with him, and his work before him.

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry *them* in his bosom, *and* shall gently lead those that are with young. (*Isaiah 40:10-11*)

And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong *be* upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee. (*Genesis 16:5*)

And the LORD said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand *was* leprous as snow. (*Exodus 4:6*)

In the Old Testament, the word is used 36 times. The above three verses are representative of the usages in the Old Testament.

It is apparent by the few representative uses here that the word "bosom" refers both to a *place and a position* in relation to some other place or position unless used in the direct context of a physical place. After all, Hagar was in Abraham's bosom (*Genesis 16:5*) while she was alive on earth. Does this mean that she was in the same place as Lazarus? Obviously not. We are also told that the only begotten Son was in the bosom of the Father. Does that mean that the Son was inside the Father? Obviously not. What these references mean is that these persons were, or are, near and dear to the heart of those in whose bosom they were. Thus, Hagar held a position near to Abraham's heart. It also means that the Son is in the Father's heart in the sense that the Father has a very great love for the Son.

Now, if we look at the word "bosom" in this way, it becomes very plain that Lazarus was very near and dear to Abraham. This would not be surprising as Lazarus, being born again of God, and an Israelite (and thus a descendent of Abraham) and poor, would be found near to Abraham's heart wherever Abraham happens to be, whether it is heaven, or some other place the Scriptures do not speak plainly about. ((The Scriptures only speak plainly about three places men can go: Two which exist now, and one which will exist in the future. These places are heaven, hell, and the Lake of Fire. I do not list the new heaven and new earth for they are plainly restricted by Scripture from this discussion.)) After all, Lazarus suffered greatly while on this earth, in a nation and people that were supposed to take care of their poor.

The other outstanding feature of the passage in Luke is that the whole context is spiritual. The conversation between the rich man and Abraham does not take place physically, but rather, spiritually. All of the persons involved, the rich man, Lazarus, and Abraham are deceased. They do not inhabit their physical bodies. Nevertheless, we are told that they do communicate, and that they "spoke" to one another. Quite plainly this was not physical speech. Thus, we can know that Hell and Abraham's bosom are both spiritual places and not physical places.

Therefore, we must concentrate on the location of Abraham after his death. In so doing, we can also concentrate on the death of any of the other Old Testament saints as they would have gone to the same place as Abraham.

What about the saints in the Old Testament?

In addressing this, we must begin with the understanding that God does not operate the way we do. With God, whatsoever He says – no matter how far into the future He speaks of it – it is as good as done. That is why the statement is made in Romans, chapter 4, verse 17:

(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, *even* God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. (*Romans 4:17*)

This statement ties directly to the statement made concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and those who worship the beast during the Great Tribulation:

And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (*Revelation 13:8*)

Thus we find that God, who sees all time all at once, and can differentiate any point in time from any other point in time, calls those things that are not yet, as though they already existed. Which, when we are given to understand, we can understand that Christ died on the cross in eternity past – though it was not yet physically accomplished. It is imperative that we understand that one can do this righteously if that individual is intrinsically righteous, and has all the attributes of God so that all things stated are brought to full completion without assistance.

So, in other words, as soon as God made the covenant with Himself for man's salvation in eternity past, the Lord Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross was accomplished. Why? As Titus, chapter 1, verse 2 states:

In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; (*Titus 1:2*)

And again we are given yet another reference to the LORD God's veracity in Hebrews, chapter 6, verses 17-18:

Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which *it* was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have

fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:
(Hebrews 6:17-18)

By these verses of Scripture we can see that God has no problem bringing to pass what He says will be. Nor does He have any problem in taking an oath that events to come will be exactly as He states. This is how that the Old Testament saints have the same salvation that we, in the time of the New Testament, have. Their salvation was based on the work of Christ to come. Because they believed the LORD God's promise of Christ to come and His work on the cross, they were justified by grace through faith even as we who believe in the LORD God's testimony of Christ's work completed. ((In case one might argue that Christ's death on the cross makes a difference as to whether the promise can be believed, I have a question: Which of us happened to be there when the Lord Jesus walked the face of this earth? Which of us was there when He was crucified? Moreover, how is it that we know the Scripture is true? How do we know that the Scripture is not like the Koran, or some other religious books that exist? Is the Scripture to be taken as true, just because someone told us it was true when we were little?

You see, we must believe the LORD God's record that the Scripture is true through the instrument of faith whereby we know, because the Holy Ghost has revealed it. We must never assume that we know the Scripture is true because we know the Scripture is true. That is circular logic and not at all pleasing to God. Rather, we must know that the Scripture is true because it has been revealed to us through that spiritual instrument called faith.

By the way, if you had been there when the Lord Jesus walked this earth, when someone told you "That's Jesus of Nazareth over there." would you have known that this Jesus was the Son of God? After all, history records that Jesus was a fairly popular name among the Jews during that time.))

The LORD God had no problem in justifying those of the Old Testament and granting them eternal life as all future events were entirely dependent upon Him. In the LORD God's economy of things, everything He has determined to accomplish, is already accomplished. If we doubt, then we might as well throw out all prophecy concerning the Great Tribulation, Millennial Reign of Christ, and the new heavens and earth. After all, the LORD is telling us about these things in His word in enough detail that we ought to know that the LORD has already brought it to pass. All that is lacking is that time will catch up to those things the LORD has already called into existence, so that these events may be made manifest. To believe otherwise, is to cast doubt upon the LORD God and His ability to bring things to pass. Which, I might add, places one's salvation squarely in the realm of doubt.

We can see this in the way that the Lord speaks to Abraham in Genesis concerning the fact that Abraham who has no children by Sarah as yet, is going to be the father of many nations. It is interesting that the Lord speaks of this in all possible tenses: Future, present, and past.

As for me, behold, my covenant *is* with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. (*Genesis 17:5-6*)

And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. (*Genesis 18:17-19*)

If we understand that the Lord knew Abraham in eternity past, long before Abraham ever was, we can then understand that the

Lord's choice of Abraham and his lineage to bring forth the Saviour was not made during Abraham's lifetime, but rather was made in eternity past. It is as if (to us anyway) this whole thing were 'set in stone' so to speak.

It is necessary to understand that the word of the Lord is as good as done whenever the Lord brings it forth. All that is necessary, is for the particular point in physical time to arrive for the event to "occur," as it were, thus making the foretold event manifest ((In case there is some question, rest assured this is not Calvinism. There is a distinct and great difference between the Calvinist doctrine of preselection and irresistible, or 'sovereign' grace, and the foreknowledge of God. Just because God knows what choices we all will make, it does not mean that He makes them for us. Rather, He simply knows what we will decide before we decide it.

As an analogy, it is somewhat like the fact that we know water will boil at 212° Fahrenheit. Now, if we know exactly how much water there is, the exact air pressure, and the exact amount of temperature rise, we will know exactly when the water will start to boil – even though we are not the one causing the water to boil. This is merely a matter of our foreknowledge which is based our current knowledge.

Since the LORD God is all-knowing, and sees all time all at once, His knowledge precludes His ever having to 'see' anything come to pass to know that it will be accomplished. With God, His foreknowledge and His present knowledge are all one and the same, meaning that it is all the same body of knowledge. Thus it is that God does not make anyone choose, rather he simply already knows how everyone will choose. Nevertheless, we are the ones that must choose for ourselves. God will not make that choice for anyone; neither will he force anyone to choose a particular way.)).

Indeed, the Scripture does attest that physical time must "catch up" to what God has called into existence. In reference

to Christ and His time on the earth, Galatians, chapter 4, verses 3-5 state plainly that the fullness of time was all that was necessary for God the Father to send the Lord Jesus Christ.

Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. (*Galatians 4:3-5*)

So then, let us see just what did happen to the saints in the Old Testament. After all, the New Testament verses cited above do indicate plainly that paradise and heaven are one and the same, and we have no certain location for Abraham's bosom based upon the use of the word "bosom."

In the Old Testament we are given glimpses of heaven and of some of the things that occur. In Job, chapters 1 and 2 we are told of Satan coming before the Lord on His throne and challenging the Lord concerning Job and Job's faithfulness. We can surely know this is heaven by the testimony of Micaiah at the judgment of Ahab:

So he came to the king. And the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we forbear? And he answered him, Go, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver *it* into the hand of the king.

And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but *that which is* true in the name of the LORD?

And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace.

And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?

And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven

standing by him on his right hand and on his left.

And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner.

And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him.

And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade *him*, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.

Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee. (*I Kings 22:15-23; II Chronicles 18:13-22*)

In the above passage we find that the “host of heaven” is around the throne of the LORD and that a “lying spirit” comes before the throne to declare what he will do to cause Ahab to fall at Ramoth-gilead. By this we know that Satan came into heaven before this same throne to challenge the LORD concerning Job. We can also note that a “lying spirit” is a fallen angel, or devil. One last thing to note is that this throne is the seat from which the LORD passes judgment upon nations and persons. More specifically, He is shown passing judgment upon Israel.

There is one other place in the Old Testament in which a judgment against the Lord’s people is revealed. In Jeremiah, chapter 15, verse 1, the LORD’s attitude towards wicked Judah is revealed. It is the structure of the statement that is most interesting.

Then said the LORD unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind *could not be* toward this people: cast *them* out of my sight, and let them go forth. (*Jeremiah 15:1*)

By the very structure of the statement, the Scripture is stating that Moses and Samuel together pleaded for Judah before the throne of the LORD. The only way it is possible for

Moses and Samuel to stand together and plead for Judah (since they lived hundreds of years apart) is that this was done in heaven, at the very same throne that Satan came before and challenged the LORD concerning Job, and the very same throne which Micaiah saw when the LORD pronounced judgment upon Ahab. The only way for Moses and Samuel to come before the LORD together in heaven – is for them to be in heaven.

Yet, we have two other references from the New Testament of Old Testament saints. In the first, when the Lord Jesus Christ was glorified on the mount of transfiguration, there appeared two persons speaking to Him. In the Gospel of Luke, it is revealed who they are and what they spoke to the Lord about:

And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.

And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment *was* white *and* glistening.

And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. (*Luke 9:28-30*)

Now, how would Moses and Elijah know all about Christ's impending sacrifice at Jerusalem? Moreover, how is it that they also appear in glory?

The last reference is from John, chapter 8, verse 56, in which the Lord Jesus states:

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw *it*, and was glad. (*John 8:56*)

By this statement, the Lord is plainly declaring that Abraham saw the birth of Christ. How? There is only one logical place that Abraham could see the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is also only one logical place for Moses and Elijah to come from to speak with the Lord Jesus Christ during His transfiguration. And there is only one logical place for Moses

and Samuel to be, to be able to immediately come before the throne of the LORD.

Abraham and Abraham's righteousness

Now, let us return to look at Abraham and what Abraham was to God, and whether Abraham would have gone directly to heaven, or to some unnamed "holding tank" or "captivity" to await the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we look at Abraham, particularly by what is stated in Romans, chapter 4, we find that Abraham was righteous in the eyes of God because he believed God, as it is stated:

For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. (*Romans 4:3*)

Therefore *it is* of faith, that *it might be* by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, *even* God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. (*Romans 4:16-17*)

There are several things contained in the above verses. However, the particulars to be focused on are:

1. The fact that God counted Abraham righteous.
2. This was done by grace through faith to Abraham so that it might be sure to all the seed. ((Let there be no mistake here: Salvation by grace through faith did not begin at Abraham. Salvation has always been by grace through faith from Adam on, even unto the end of this earth. The standard the LORD God has set to attain righteousness has never changed, just as the LORD God has never changed. The reason Abraham is used here is that he is the clear progenitor of Israel and presents an outstanding testimony as the friend of God that is

clearly traceable.))

3. God calls those things that be not, as though they already existed.

Beginning at the first point, we must ask the question: Is righteousness a quantitative, or a qualitative attribute? In other words, is righteousness an absolute quality in which either you are, or you are not?

By the Scripture, we find that righteousness is qualitative. In Ezekiel, chapter 18, the Lord states the following to the children of Judah so that they can understand how righteousness works.

Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. (*Ezekiel 18:4*)

But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. (*Ezekiel 18:21-22*)

But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, *and* doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked *man* doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die. (*Ezekiel 18:24*)

Now here we find that the Lord speaks in the context of the covenant with Israel. However, the principles contained in the above verses apply across the board. One must keep all – not some, but all of the law to be righteous. Thus, a single sin is sufficient to have someone condemned to hell for all eternity. This is reinforced in James, chapter 2:

If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. (*James 2:8-11*)

Thus we find that righteousness is a qualitative attribute, which makes it absolute. Either you are as righteous as God, or you are not. Therefore, Abraham was as righteous as God in the eyes of God since the LORD had imputed His righteousness unto him. What is it that is stated in II Corinthians?

For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (*II Corinthians 5:21*)

Was Abraham “in Christ,” or “in Adam” when he was reckoned to be righteous? By the way, just where do righteous people go when they die?

The second point builds upon the first in that it states quite plainly that Abraham was saved by grace through faith just as we are. Thus, what fundamental difference exists between Abraham’s salvation and ours? Incidentally, a point in time is not a fundamental difference to the LORD God as the following point demonstrates.

The third point is one that directly applies the following verse:

And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (*Revelation 13:8*)

God “calleth those things which be not as though they were.” Just when was the Lamb slain? Since the Lord declares that the

Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world (though it had not physically happened as yet) would not Abraham be covered? Since Abraham is also righteous, would he not be permitted in heaven? After all, God declares that Abraham has His righteousness.

Since the LORD's promises are as good as done when they are given, so much so that the Scripture declares that the Lamb was slain *from* the foundation for the world, it is only logical (and plainly declared) that the Old Testament saints went to heaven immediately. Even the Scripture declares this of Elijah in II Kings, chapter 2, verse 11:

And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. (*II Kings 2:11*)

The underlying word for heaven here, is of course – heaven.

Of course, this particular understanding of the Scripture does answer the verse in Colossians, chapter 1, which states:

And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven. (*Colossians 1:20*)

Now, we know that the use of the term “things on earth” refers specifically to men as nothing else on earth is granted salvation, or reconciliation with God. Therefore, the term “things in heaven” must refer to those who went to heaven prior to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

Just like the saints in the Old Testament were granted salvation based upon the future work of Christ, they also went to heaven based upon that same work.

Why?

Because it was as good as done.

Since we have seen from the Old Testament that Moses, Samuel, Elijah and Abraham are all in heaven, it is logical to conclude that Abraham's bosom is simply another reference to heaven, and more specifically a reference to the comfort Lazarus is now receiving.

There is one other point to be made prior to moving on to the adjunct issues of this doctrine, which is:

We also are depending upon the promise of God the same as the Old Testament saints.

In Hebrews, chapter 11 we find a statement that pertains to both Old and New Testament saints.

And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. (Hebrews 11:39-40)

Thus we find that neither Old or New Testament saint are as yet made perfect. Why? The resurrection has not yet occurred. None of us will be made perfect until the resurrection of the body. If then, this doctrine that the Old Testament saints could not go to heaven as they were not truly made righteous, is indeed true, then what is to say that we should be granted access to heaven as we are not yet made perfect either?

In summation, it should be obvious that the promises of God are yea and amen and that God honors His own promises. To say otherwise is to implicitly state that God questions His own ability to carry out what He states He will do. Since God cannot lie (Titus 1:2), I find this to be an impossibility. God is not a man, and we should not attempt to apply man's frailties to God, lest we be found guilty. Thus, like us, the Old Testament saints went to heaven when they died, based upon the promises of God and the imputed righteousness they had.

Finis