

# THE CEREMONY OF BAPTISM

Adapted from a sermon by Rev. Geoffrey H. Howard

Baptism was first established through John the Baptist whose mission was to prepare people to receive the Lord. So baptism was to be a sign of entrance into the Christian Church. Its purpose was to represent the fact that a person's mind must first be washed clean from the taint of sin and the darkness of falsity before it can be opened to receive the Lord. So baptism is a representative ceremony.

Water was the essential element used in baptism. Water corresponds to truth. What water does for the human body, truth does for the human spirit. We use water to wash our bodies and make them clean. We also use it to drink, to maintain our fluid supplies and stay alive. Water also serves in the elimination of waste materials. Truth in the mind or spirit works in the same way as water taken in through the mouth, and has similar cleansing effects. Truth has the power to wash the mind clean from falsities and so to get rid of ignorance and spiritual darkness.

Baptism was introduced into the Christian Church to represent this process—a process which is essential to the human spirit if it is to be prepared for heaven. And this is the Lord's one and only purpose for people. Now no one gets into heaven just because he has been baptized with water. But it is also true that no one can come into heaven unless his mind has been cleansed by the Lord's truth. A person must choose to receive that truth and also choose to live according to it. For truth brings light into the mind, and it sets the stage for our free and intelligent response to the Lord. These things are all represented in baptism, which is sometimes called the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.