the page). All of our oldest Greek manuscripts of Mark’s Gospel, however, conclude with 16:8, which leaves us with two possibilities: (1) the ending of Mark got lost sometime before any of our oldest manuscripts were produced (in which case there is no way to know how this Gospel actually concluded); or, (2) Mark deliberately ended his Gospel in this fashion to achieve some sort of rhetorical effect. Both theories have their advocates, but a strong majority of scholars favor the latter solution, which then leaves us with more questions: What was the rhetorical effect that he had in mind? Why end the story with fear and silence?

This touches on another distinctive aspect of Mark’s Gospel: it is imbued with a sense of mystery and ambiguity, and the story is told with a profound appreciation for letting things go unsaid (cf. 1:43–44; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26, 30; 9:9). Jesus doesn’t mind leaving people in the dark (see 4:10–12), nor does Mark feel any compulsion to sort things out for us. We will note one example among dozens that could be cited. In Mark 8:14–21 Jesus tells his disciples, “Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod.” They don’t understand what this means, and he becomes upset with them. What he does not do, however, is explain what he meant, and many readers might be left feeling as unenlightened as his disciples. We get that we are supposed to understand the metaphor of yeast, but do we understand it? Interestingly, both Matthew and

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### Box 6.5

**Intercalation in the Gospel of Mark**

Jesus’ family sets out to seize him (3:21);
- religious leaders accuse Jesus of using the power of Beelzebul (3:22–30);
- Jesus’ family arrives and is rebuffed by him (3:31–35).

Jesus goes to heal the daughter of Jairus, a synagogue ruler (5:22–24);
- a woman with hemorrhages is healed by touching Jesus’ garment (5:25–34);
- Jesus raises the daughter of Jairus from the dead (5:35–43).

Jesus sends his disciples out on a mission (6:7–13);
- Mark gives an account of how Herod killed John the Baptist (6:14–29);
- the disciples return with a report of their mission (6:30).

Jesus curses a fig tree for not bearing fruit (11:12–14);
- Jesus attacks the temple, calling it a “den of robbers” (11:15–19);
- the fig tree that Jesus cursed has withered and died (11:20–21).